

A Jockey's life

He loved the outdoors.

'Being cooped up all day is only a job for us chickens', he used to say.

It was his way of telling us that we were about to get some fresh air.

During the school holidays my grandad would always take me and my brother on an adventure, either to Carr Wood or Ashworth Valley.

One summer, as I was riding high on his shoulders like a king riding a white stallion, he taught us a poem his father had taught him when he was a lad. My brother doesn't remember it any more, but I do. It went something like this...

*A jockey's life ain't all honey,
Though folks put me down as a frost.
I'd be at the top today Sir,
If I'd won all the races I've lost.
Many a time I've come third...
(With three runners)
Which proves I'm always a trier.
I've rode in the Oaks and the Leger,
And also the Black Maria!*

I remember turning to him, shaking my head.
'I don't get it'.

'It's easy really. But then everything's easy when you know the answers.'

I still didn't get it.

'Honey is something sweet to the taste, while frost is something you want to avoid'.

'Oh I see, so he's trying to say a jockey's life is not always sweet and that people don't put money on him to win anymore'.

'That's right, and the Oaks and the Leger are famous horse races'.

'I get it now. So the Black Maria is a horse race too?'

'No, that's the punch line. It's an old nickname for a police van.'

He laughed and after I'd thought about it for some time, I laughed too.

