

As I spent my first year in England in the pleasant small town of Maidenhead, it may be well to write down my impressions, as recorded at the time in my diary. The town owed its original importance to the narrow 18th century road bridge, on which the Great West Road, leading from London to Bath and Bristol, crossed the Thames. A century later, when the first major railway was built for the same purpose, a second bridge was needed and again a century later in the 20th century, a third bridge was needed for the M 4, the Motorway. All bridges are in or near Maidenhead.

I was much impressed by its closeness to Windsor, the royal residence, only a few miles [the English mile equals 1.6 km] away. Maidenhead had a High Street running from West to East which already in the 1930s was a One-Way Street, then extremely rare. Traffic in the opposite direction had to use a long circuitous route, past the only cinema and the railway station, which had the town's bicycle repair shop opposite. This was a most important location for me, as my bicycle was not infrequently in need of attention.

One of the most prestigious shops in Maidenhead was the jeweller and antiques purveyor to Her Majesty Queen Mary, the Queen Mother at the time, a real Edwardian lady. Having obtained the Royal Warrant for his shop and proudly displaying it above the shop window, the poor jeweller had to suffer for it. Queen Mary who sometimes drove over from nearby Windsor, where she lived, was in the habit of strolling round the antiques and pointed with her umbrella which she always carried, weather fair or foul, to an object she liked and said "Send it over to Windsor". This was of course a royal command for the jeweller and to be carried out immediately, although he knew very well that he might have to wait many months before he was paid for it! (I knew this intimate detail from the jeweller's daughter whom I invited to the cinema and a cup of tea, whenever I could afford it.)

When writing these few lines about Queen Mary, I was sufficiently intrigued to look her up in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. I learnt that her name was Mary of Teck, in full: Victoria Mary Augusta Louise Olga Pauline Claudine Agnes [1867-1953]. In 1893 she married George V who became King in 1910. The *E.B.* continues: 'Her intellect, good sense and artistic taste and her concern for the servicemen of World Wars I and II fitted her to be the wife of a Sovereign and to make her popular with all classes of the British.' Except perhaps the unlucky jeweller in Maidenhead.