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# Escape from royal baby media circus leads to London's betting shops

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A Ladbrokes employee writes odds for the royal baby on a chalk board in front of the Lindo Wing.

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No sign yet," the Queen jokingly told a young schoolgirl while on a walkabout Wednesday in the Lake District National Park in Cumbria.

The Best Royal Baby Merchandise

The Queen's remarks about the baby followed a comment Tuesday from Prince William's stepmother, Camilla Parker Bowles, that the new prince or princess will likely arrive "by the end of the week."

The British and international media may be transfixed by this blessed event, but those with a royal connection have adopted a characteristically phlegmatic tone.

"Not terribly," said Margaret Rhodes, the Queen's cousin and best friend when asked if she was caught up in the excitement by CNN's formidable Christiane Amanpour.

"Well, you know, everybody has babies," Rhodes added. "And it's lovely, but I don't get wildly excited about it."

With lots of time on my hands, and badly wanting to get away from the sun-scorched media circus around St. Mary's Hospital, Paddington, where the likely future king or queen of Canada is to be born, I decided Wednesday to have a bit of a flutter at the nearest betting shop.

I wagered a tenner (about \$15.55 CAD) at Ladbrokes that the baby's first name will be Victoria, like her great-great-great-grandmother, who reigned over Britain and the Empire for 64 years until 1901.

Ladbrokes offered 6-1 odds that the baby would be called Victoria. A short time later I discovered to my regret that the payout would have been higher at William Hill, which is the other major British betting house. It was offering odds of 9-1 on Victoria.

Although nobody can explain the imbalance, the odds were 3-1



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that it would be a girl compared to 9-4 that it would be a boy.

If it was a girl, Alexandra was the solid favourite at Ladbrokes and William Hill. James or George were the favourites if it was a boy.

Those names were atop a long list that included many with historical connections such as Diana, Elizabeth, Alice, Mary, Charles and Philip. Adam and Eve, Basil (perhaps because of Fawlty Towers?) filled out the middle ranks, followed by Barack at 200-1. The king of rock and roll, Elvis, was pegged as a 500-1 longshot.

Bets as small as 50 pence (\$1.30 CAD) were permitted.

"The horse and dog customers are not really into the royal baby, but I have taken a few bets," said clerk Julie Hutt, surveying a spartan room where men quietly monitored television sets showing horse and dog races.

"You'll find that it is women who are into betting on the royal baby, not men," said another clerk, Marie Desbelus. "But I had a couple bet on the name yesterday. So did a man who left his three kids out in the street."

The sex of the baby has been kept a secret even from the parents, Buckingham Palace says, but as has been widely noted in the media here, a solid majority of Britons reckon that Kate is about to produce a princess, not a prince. However, with the expected due date having come and gone, no more bets were being taken on which day the baby may finally be born.

True to the idea that Britons will bet on just about anything, Ladbrokes was not only taking bets on the royal baby's name and gender. It was also taking wagers on the number of names the royal tot will be given, its weight at birth and its hair colour. Most of the smart money was on the baby following royal tradition by having four or five names, weighing between five and six pounds and having brown or blond hair.

There was even a category for which women's magazine would

This has to be the week where a cottage said to their boss "Hey, Then disappeared.

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publish the first pictures of the royal offspring. The big favourite there was [OK magazine](#), which dotes on the royal family. It was followed by Vogue, Now, Women, Bella and Marie Claire.

None of this meant much to a group of Albanian punters from Kosovo who were betting on greyhound races being broadcast live from Hove.

"I just lost my lunch money," complained one of them as he threw away his betting form in disgust. "People think this is a lot of fun, but gambling is an addiction. This is the worst thing you can do with your life."

With his luck having gone to the dogs, the man approached the counter to inquire about placing a bet on which television show would get the first interview with William and Kate and their new baby.

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**Matthew Fisher**

Postmedia's international affairs columnist is Canada's longest serving foreign correspondent. He has lived abroad for 30 years in Europe, the Middle East, Far East and, most recently, Afghanistan. His... [read more](#)

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