

Special Feature

The Royal Maundy

The distribution of alms and the washing of feet on the Thursday of Holy Week are of great antiquity. The Royal Maundy can be traced back in England with certainty to the thirteenth century and there are continuous records of the distribution having been made on Maundy Thursday from the reign of King Edward I. The first recorded Royal Distribution was at Knaresborough, North Yorkshire, by King John in 1210.



Maundy coins are legal tender and when the UK changed to decimal currency in 1971, the face value of a set of four coins became ten new pence. Although the coins are legal tender, they do not circulate because of their silver content and numismatic value. It is my understanding that 2013 is the first time the distribution has taken place in Oxford. Beginning in 1699 the monarch did not attend the service, sending an official in his place. In 1931 Princess Marie

Louise was at Royal Maundy and afterwards suggested that her cousin, King George V, make the distribution the following year which he did, beginning a new custom.

Uniquely Minted Silver Coins

From the 15th century, the number of recipients has been related to the years of the sovereign's life. Recipients are now pensioners selected because of the Christian service they have rendered to the Church and the community. The distribution is in two parts and the gifts which are handed to the recipients are symbolic. The act of washing the feet seems to have been discontinued in about 1730.

The red purse contains a £5 coin and a 50p coin commemorating the 60th anniversary of her Majesty's coronation. The white purse contains uniquely minted silver Maundy coins – silver pennies, two three and four pence pieces – as many pence as the sovereign has years of age.

Representing the Wychwoods

I am sure you will appreciate my surprise and delight on receipt of a letter from the Royal Almonry office at Buckingham Palace informing me that the Bishop of Oxford had submitted my name to be one of the Maundy recipients at the Royal Maundy service to take place at Christ Church Cathedral, Oxford, on the 28th March, 2013. All recipients and their companions were invited to attend a lecture on Saturday 9th March, to learn the history of the ceremony followed by instructions for the service itself. On Maundy Thursday we were asked to assemble at St Aldate's Church

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immediately opposite Christ Church Cathedral by 9.30am on a cold but sunny day where we received our security passes and seat numbers. The companions were immediately escorted to take their places in the cathedral. The recipients followed later by which time crowds of students and locals were lining St Aldate's all the way north to Carfax Tower as we entered through Christ Church's Tom Gate. By 10.15am all companions and recipients were seated. The Cathedral was bedecked with floral arrangements and the Yeomen of the Guard gave an additional flash of colour and pomp.

Organ music before the service was played by Sub-organist of Christ Church, Sub-organist of Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, Junior Organ Scholar of Christ Church and Senior Organ Scholar Christ Church. The service was sung by the choirs of Christ Church and Her Majesty's Chapel Royal, St James' Palace. The Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh entered the cathedral at precisely 11 o'clock having flown in by helicopter and then chauffeured to the

historic entrance by royal limousine. The distribution of the Royal Maundy money was divided into two parts. The Queen presented the purses to each of the 87 men and 87 women at different stages of the service. Although she did not speak to me, her smile and eye contact conveyed all that was necessary. The ceremony, I believe, is very special to her. I was surprised at how short the Queen is but how well she was looking considering that this was only her second appearance in public since her hospitalisation. After the service all recipients and companions were invited to lunch in the Great Hall. The Queen and Duke had a separate engagement at Oriel College. As to be expected, the whole operation was done with military precision and the outcome was a credit to the organisers and volunteers.

Thank you to Revd. Kate Stacey for putting my name forward. I truly felt I was there representing many other equally deserving people of the Wychwoods, our great community.

Martin Gibbs

Energize is back this summer!

Children's Sport and Dance Days

Monday 5th August and Wednesday 21st August 10 am to 3pm

(Half day 10 am to 12.30 pm)

6 to 11 year olds

£18 per day (early booking fee of £15 if booked by 21/7/13)

New for 2013:

Bouncing Balls meets Little Dancers

Wednesday 7th August

10 am to 12 noon

Monday August 19th

3 to 5 year olds

£8 per day

New Beaconsfield Hall and Green, Shipton-under-Wychwood

Check out www.bouncing-balls.co.uk/ coming soon for more details or contact Lisa or Sally on: 0781 1174733 or email: energize@talktalk.net