

Maundy Thursday at Durham Cathedral



On Thursday, 17th April I was very lucky and privileged to attend the Maundy service held in Durham cathedral in the presence of their Majesties the King and Queen. It was the first time the service had been held in Durham since 1967.

76 men and 76 women, corresponding with the King's age, received the Maundy money. They had been chosen from areas across the north of England and southern Scotland.

The cathedral was packed with about 2000 people and I was very lucky to be seated at the front of the nave beside the cathedral's crossing.

Just a few feet away were the 2 chairs which had been specially made for the King and Queen. Before the royal couple arrived there were several processions of VIP guests, Yeoman Warders from the Tower of London in their magnificent ceremonial uniforms and choristers from the Chapel Royal in their beautiful scarlet and gold uniforms. They were accompanied by the cathedral's choristers and visiting choristers. There were also representatives of many different faiths.

Then the state trumpeters sounded a fanfare to welcome the arrival of the senior clergy and the King and Queen as they processed along the Nave. It was amazing to see that their majesties were seated just a few feet away from me.

The ceremony itself included a selection of organ and choral music as well as hymns and Bible readings. The culmination was the combined choirs singing Handel's magnificent Zadok the Priest.

The recipients of the Maundy money were seated around the nave and side aisles of the cathedral. As the king presented their money it was obvious he knew something about each individual and chatted with them. The whole ceremony lasted about an hour then it was over. The King and Queen went to the deanery for a short while before leaving and taking time to greet the large crowds which had gathered in front of the cathedral. The culmination of it all was a wonderful peal of the cathedral's bells as the royal couple left and were talking to the crowds.

A day to remember

Malcolm Wilkinson

Chair of Seaham Harbour u3a and a Senior Volunteer in the cathedral.