

# The Friends of the Moot Hall Organ

## Chairman's Annual Report 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021

It is hard to believe that my last Annual Report to you was eighteen months ago -so much has happened! From the outstanding success of Richard Hills' accompaniment to the 1925 film, 'The Phantom of the Opera' in November 2019, through the installation of additional humidifying equipment for the organ, in May 2020, to the curtailment and then cancellation of the Tuesday Recitals due to the pandemic. Thus, in this financial period, we enjoyed just eight lunchtime recitals with Ashley Grote, Mark Brafield, David Poulter, William Baldry, William Saunders and Ian Ray and with vocal support from Gillian Wilson in December 2019.

I was thrilled by how successful 'The Phantom' was as an event; it worked very well, and Richard's skills were brilliant. Unfortunately, The Friends had to provide financial support, which I had hoped to avoid. But, in my view, it was well worth doing.

Following discussion and advice from Dr William McVicker and Harrison & Harrison 'The Friends' agreed to purchase humidifying equipment of a design that is unusual for organs. It was severely tested over the ensuing months as the organ was little played. Ian Ray managed to gain access from time to time but restrictions prevented visits to the extent he would have wished. As ever, I would like to record my sincere thanks to Ian for his work as Borough Organist.

Thanks to the generous financial support of members and recital goers we funded this new equipment and currently have a reasonable balance to carry forward.

Since our last AGM, in January 2020, I have done my best to maintain communication with the committee without holding any physical meetings and I am grateful to them for their support at this difficult time. Honorary Alderman Ray Gamble resigned from the committee earlier this year and we must record our appreciation of his support over the years. All other members have indicated they are willing to continue in office. In particular may I add my appreciation to our treasurer, Alison Smith, who is always a calming voice in my ear; to Alex Blustin, our webmaster, who is providing his sound advice and services at a reduced fee this coming year; to Cong Gu, Finance Manager, at Colchester Borough Homes, for verifying the Accounts before you today and finally to all the Town Hall staff, both those we see and those behind the scenes for all their support and help.

Finally, may I add that I always look forward so I am happy to put the covid-19 lockdown behind me and think of the future. I am determined to continue where we left off with the Lunchtime Recitals and we are also again supporting the national 'Heritage Day' in September, when anyone can come along and play the organ - under Ian's watchful eye, of course!