

complexity. It took eight years to build five houses in Ulcombe.

The government has recently realised the problem and seems to have decided that it is on the supply side, that if they put a lot of land on the market with planning permission prices will be stabilized. As this is too late they need a big and quick solution.

*"Yes Minister"*

*"Oh dear, yes, I see we seem to have a problem here. Well now, Humphrey, what are we going to do?"*

*Well, minister, fortunately we've got the answer for you. We need an extra 330,000 new houses in Kent. Luckily we can put 300,000 in the Thames gateway and 80,000 in Ashford.*

*Oh good!*

*Yes, minister, just sign this order and leave the rest to Bernard and his team"*

John Prescott has said this is government policy and whoever wins the election in May, this is what is going to happen. Planners, engineers and architects have to allocate the land, work up the details, assess the infrastructure, cater for sustainability and *do the detailed design*... In the past so as to control costs detailed design was left to the house builders who had standard home types. Design rather than "sustainability" (whatever that might mean) is the criterion of success. After all the discussions, arguments and disagreements, houses did *somehow* get built. What was most important was how they looked.

John Walker concluded with a sequence of slides illustrating his own developments and was suitably and heartily applauded.

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## "MY DOVER"

**A talk by Cllr David Hannent - Reported by Jack Woolford**

David was born in a house in Buckland Avenue fifty nine years ago and by the time he was seventeen had lived in no less than six streets, the best of which was Castle Avenue. After schooling at St Mary's, St Martin's and Dover Grammar he spent seven years at college in London, at what is now the University of East London, and returned to Dover and worked for the District Council on such things as the Multi-Storey Car Park, Brook House, the Sports Centre and Friars Way before becoming Project Manager at the Whitfield offices.

In 1984 he set up as a Project Manager and Chartered Surveyor in Castle Street and variously worked with



English Heritage on Dover Castle, the Drop Redoubt, the Emmaus building at Archcliffe Fort and 50 others including the Territorial Army HQ in London Road and, currently, the Ladywell Development and a warehouse in Whitfield.

In 2003 he helped establish the Independent Alliance and became a town councillor, helping to save Maison

Dieu House from private sale.

With a long sequence of illustrations, accompanied by witty and ironical remarks which excited (rueful?) laughter from all quarters of the gathering, he asked the question: "Was Dover in better shape now than fifty years ago"? His answers were that the Port but not the Town was better but that we were all trying.

## April

### "FRENCH AS SHE IS SUNG"

A talk by Philip Robinson - Reported by Jack Woolford

**S**tanding in at short notice because SCllr. Paul Watkins could not, as a parliamentary candidate, speak on "Dover Pride", Philip Robinson, Professor of French at the University of Kent at Canterbury, gave as much a musical and dramatic recital as a talk. It was, indeed, entertaining; but the instruction was real. His subject was the radical difference between French and practically all other European languages as far as the principles of speaking were concerned. He started with some examples of English from Shakespeare and Thomas Gray, to remind us that the basic building-block of our language, and therefore of our verse, is the stress-pattern in words: in words of more than one syllable, one or more of the syllables would be stressed whilst others would not, eg "The CURfew TOLLs the KNEll of PARTing DAY". He then (incredibly) sang and acted the Duke of Plaza-Toro's patter song from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Gondoliers* (unaccompanied but superbly) to demonstrate how the stress patterns of "That celebrated, underrated nobleman" matched the music in an amusing and necessary way.

But what happened when the language did not have any given pattern of stress within words, when all syllables had equal weight, as was the case in French? One thing that happened was that foreign learners of French, including Anglophiles, found it very hard to have to do without the basic building block of their own language. A French word or phrase was a string of equally-weighted syllables, with only the slightest stress, and pause, on the last syllable of the string. This was one of the most important things to remember when speaking French, if one hoped to be understood at all.

The Gallic ear was as offended by unwanted stress as the English person's was if a native French speaker tried to leave out the stress patterns when speaking English! The nature of the French language meant that French verse was not characterized by the number of 'feet' but by the number of syllables in a line. The point was illustrated by showing a few lines from Racine's *Andromaque*. The rhythmic interest of French verse was maintained, in the twelve-syllable lines of French tragedy, by varying the length