

Kent's favourite free newspaper

Crash closes carriageway

by SIAN NAPIER

THE Dover-bound carriageway of the A2 in Canterbury was closed for almost 12 hours on Saturday after a Polish lorry jack-knifed and turned over following a collision with a transit van.

No one was seriously hurt in the accident, which happened just after 2am, about a mile from the Wincheap slip road.

The lorry was travelling towards Dover when it was involved in an accident with a broken down transit van which was parked partly on the road and partly on the grass verge.

All Dover-bound traffic was diverted through Canterbury. Radio traffic warnings were broadcast advising motorists to keep away from the area.

The lorry driver and two people from the van were taken to Kent and Canterbury Hospital with shock and slight injuries and released after treatment. Four other people in the van were not hurt.

The road was eventually reopened at 1.10pm.



The lorry straddles the A2 on its side at Harbledown

School report is a birthday bonus

A VILLAGE school has two reasons to cheer — its 25th birthday, and an outstanding Ofsted report for excellence.

Bridge and Patixbourne Church of England Primary School has received top marks from inspectors of the Office of Standards in Education.

“This outstanding report has got our silver jubilee off to a fantastic start,” said school head Anna Newton.

Ofsted says the school provides a high standard of education and there is an orderly community where children feel safe, secure and enjoy attending.

“It is a vibrant, interesting place to be, with an excellent ethos. It provides very good value for money and its standards are well above the county average,” the report states.

The education is balanced and the quality of learning and teaching is good, with examples of outstanding practice throughout the school.

Mrs Newton is praised for her “good leadership” and her teachers, the report adds, have a wide knowledge and understanding of the national curriculum.

The only blemishes noted by the inspectors were a hedge around the pond which has now been cut down, and parents have been asked to notify the school on the first morning of the child’s absence.

“The governors are very proud of this report as it shows that the teaching, management and ethos of the school are of the highest level,” said chairman of the governors Grace Goodman.



CAKE CELEBRATION: pupils Rebecca Pullman, Christopher White, Thomas Andrews, Lorraine Blake, Thomas Mackay-Millar and Joanne Smith

LT-COL DOUGLAS DE CENT

Lieutenant-Colonel Douglas de Cent, OBE, soldier and diplomat, died on October 18 aged 77. He was born on September 15, 1918.

IT WAS typical of Douglas de Cent that he once said: "Escape gave me my own liberty and kindled a desire to help those who were still, or destined to become, prisoners." During the Second World War he escaped from the hands of the Axis powers on at least two occasions and this led to his involvement with the Special Forces.

Douglas Cecil de Cent was born in Bridge, near, Canterbury, Kent. His father was a naval surgeon who spent much time in the Pacific. Originally, he wanted to be a pianist, although this was not considered to be a suitable career by his family.

On the outbreak of war in 1939, he enlisted as a private in the Kent Yeomanry. In the spring of 1940 he was sent to France as a gunner with the British Expeditionary Force. Before long, like tens of thousands of others, he returned via Dunkirk.

Having been selected for officer training, he rejoined his regiment as a subaltern and found himself in the Western Desert by way of South Africa, Bombay and Mesopotamia. At one time, he escaped death by a hair's breadth when a German shell splinter passed by his face. However, the real turning point of his career came when he was taken prisoner.

Jumping off the prison lorry, he escaped in the company of a colonel and almost succeeded in reaching British lines before being recaptured. From there de Cent was transported to Italy and interned. In prisoner of war camps at Sulmona and in Bologna, the escape attempts continued, despite a tunnel collapsing on one occasion when a heavily laden donkey walked over it.

He finally escaped just as his camp was being taken over



by the Germans after the Italian surrender. Then began a 500-mile walk through Italy towards Allied lines. It was on this arduous and dangerous but ultimately successful march that he first met his second wife Gillian. She had also escaped from the Italians after having been interned earlier in the war.

On returning to England, de Cent put his new-found skills to good use, serving with the Special Forces under Airey Neave. He was concerned with all aspects of the escape and evasion of prisoners and collecting intelligence. During this time he was instrumental in helping to snatch back to safety the survivors of the ill-fated Arnhem airborne operation of September 1944.

With the war over, he became engaged in the investigation, administration and distribution of aid, which in turn led to diplomatic work in Belgium, France and Denmark. He was also engaged in writing official war histories and was second-in-command and then commanding officer of 23 SAS.

The war in Korea created a demand for specialist techniques and services in support of Allied troops. In 1951 de Cent was approached by the Ministry of Defence to organise and command an independent, joint-service special operations formation directly responsible to London. As a

lieutenant-colonel at the age of 32, he was responsible for intricate land, sea and air operations and commanded an intelligence school. He was engaged in training units of the Commonwealth Brigade and US Forces in techniques of evasion and escape. He was appointed OBE for his service in Korea.

After a spell commanding a survival school in Austria and work at the Ministry of Defence, de Cent was appointed military attaché to the British Embassy in Laos. After three years in Indo-China, he was posted as head of the independent consular mission to eastern Indonesia, Dutch New Guinea and Portuguese Timor, which was the largest territorial mission of its kind in the Diplomatic Service.

Upon leaving government employ in 1963, de Cent put his diplomatic and intelligence-gathering experience to good use, becoming director of press and public relations at the Royal College of Nursing. At the RCN he instituted the annual members' congress and exhibition as well as the house newspaper, the *Nursing Standard*. He was also responsible for the planning and organisation of several notable pay campaigns.

He summed up his press and public relations philosophy as "to speak the truth, to meet deadlines, carry out promises and to keep a low profile. I was there to promote the college, not myself." After 20 years, he retired in June 1983.

Apart from his military and diplomatic careers Douglas de Cent was also active in supporting charity and relief work, aiding a Korean orphans' school and a school for blind children. A private and modest man, he was noted for his love of cricket, opera, good food and, especially, his generosity when opening his excellent and extensive wine cellar.

He was married three times and is survived by his third wife Theodorine and both his previous wives. He also leaves a son and a daughter.