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NEWS IN BRIEF

Flyaway stork is finally captured at Premier Inn

AN escaped Marabou stork (inset), found mainly on the wetlands of central Africa, was spotted in Ashford last week.

RSPCA inspectors first tried to capture the bird after it was seen in at a sewage treatment works in West Sussex.

However the bird, which had escaped from Eagle Heights bird centre near Tunbridge Wells, avoided capture and made it way to the roof of the Premier Inn in Ashford.

A local falconer was called and finally captured the stork.



Eurostar ticket sales rise

EUROSTAR, which runs trains from Ashford International, says it has seen a recovery in ticket sales. Sales were up 6.8 per cent compared to this time last year.

It puts the increase mainly down to the fact the Channel Tunnel is now operating at full capacity after the serious fire which closed one of the tunnels for several months last year.

The company says that 6.9 million travellers have used its trains between January and September this year.

Did you hear racist row?

POLICE are asking customers of a shop in Kingsnorth Road who may have witnessed a racist incident to contact them.

A man entered the Best One shop on October 12 at 6.15pm where he bought cigarettes and alcohol. He got into an argument with the storeowner claiming he had been short-changed. It's alleged that racist remarks were used during the disagreement.

Any witnesses should call 01233 896283.

Halloween at the House

GODINTON House is hosting its popular annual Pumpkin Day on October 25.

There will be traditional pumpkin lantern carving, a treasure hunt and scary stories in the mansion's cellars. Plus, for the first time, there will also be an opportunity to meet several varieties of owls.

Entrance is £2 for children including free treasure hunt and £4 for adults. There is a small charge for other activities.

Great lady's spirit lives on through town

MANY newcomers to Ashford may not know why a dual carriageway which runs past a retail park is named after a French woman.

Yet Simone Weil was counted amongst the 20th Century's greatest thinkers, described by Nobel prize-winning author Albert Camus as "the only great spirit of our time".

Born in Paris in 1909, Weil spent her whole life putting her philosophy of respect for human dignity into practice.

In 1915, when she was only six years old, she sent parcels of sugar and chocolate to soldiers fighting in World War One.

Later, she campaigned for workers' rights and fought in the Spanish Civil War.

Yet she suffered from ill-health her entire life and was notoriously uncoordinated. In fact, her comrades fighting for the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War considered her more of a threat to themselves than the enemy.

She wrote on most aspects of human life, but is perhaps best known for her works dealing with spirituality.

BY ED HILL

In 1937, she had a profound religious revelation and became interested in the rituals and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, although most people believe she was never baptized and she remained critical of many of its teachings.

By 1942, she had arrived in London as part of the French Resistance in the hope of forming a group of front-line nurses who would risk their lives by treating the wounded on the battlefields.

However, due the punishing work routine she adopted she soon fell ill and was told by doctors to retire to the countryside to recover.

She did little to help her recovery, making things worse by only agreeing to eat the amount of food she believed her fellow countrymen were receiving in occupied France from the Germans.

Some believe she considered starving herself to death as the most saintly way to end her life, and she died in Grosvenor Hall, then a sanatorium in 1943, aged 34, having contracted tuber-



HEROINE: Simone Weil died at Grosvenor Hall in 1943

culosis. She is buried in Bybrook Cemetery.

Most of her works were published after she died and since then her reputation as a philosopher has steadily grown.

A forthcoming art exhibition exploring aspects of her life will be held at Ashford International Station next month.

In 1983, the dual carriageway was named after her and a hat that she used to wear while gathering grapes was presented to Ashford council by the association dedicated to promoting her works.

Artist Dino Alfier has been to many of the important places she visited during her life and will be presenting his video installation inspired by her life at the end of November.

To find out more go to www.dinoalfier.com.

Crashed lorry causes chaos to local motorists



HOLD UP: The lorry laying on its side at Junction 10

THERE were severe traffic delays around Ashford last week after a lorry overturned at the Crooksfoot roundabout at Junction 10 of the M20.

The articulated lorry lay on its side blocking the exit to the London-bound carriageway and traffic joining the roundabout from the A2070. It also shed some of its load of soup packets and other food ingredients across the lanes of the roundabout.

Highway authority officers were at the scene clearing away the debris by 8.30am and traffic was re-routed around the obstruction. Long traffic queues soon built up on the A2070 and at the eastbound

junction 10 exit off the motorway.

The crash was described on national radio as causing the worst traffic disruption in the entire country that day.

The driver of the lorry was unharmed, but as yet there is no explanation for how the truck ended up on its side.

It was finally righted by late afternoon and taken away in time for the evening rush hour. The Highways Agency said a large amount of diesel was also spilt across the road which delayed the clear up operation.

A fire crew from Ashford also attended the incident to lay down matting and stop fuel getting into the drains.

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