

Essex-based Blue Triangle joins Go-Ahead

THE Go-Ahead Group has acquired Essex-based bus operator Blue Triangle.

The company has a fleet of 60 vehicles. It operates eight services for Transport for London and nine for Essex County Council from a single garage in Rainham.

The acquisition of Blue Triangle and the start of two huge London Buses' contracts – Route 24 and 453 – over the next few months will make Go-Ahead the largest operator in the capital. As of February next year Go-Ahead will have 20.5 per cent of the London bus market.

The group's portfolio of operators in the capital comprises London General, London Central, Metrobus, Docklands Minibuses and Blue Triangle.

The acquisition of Blue Triangle comes hard on the heels of the Docklands Minibuses purchase and expands significantly Go-Ahead's footprint in east London.

Managing director John Trayner said: "The acquisition of Blue Triangle represents an important step for us and complements the continuing strong organic growth of our London bus business, which remains at the top of the TfL quality league table."

"Along with Docklands Minibuses, Blue Triangle provides us with a significant presence in east London and gives us the opportunity to remain competitive in what is clearly an expanding market."

Nick looks at performance

Nick Rouse is set on putting Stockwell at the top of the performance league.



NICK ROUSE was appointed engineering manager at Stockwell in July. It follows a brief spell in a similar position at Docklands Minibuses and Peckham garage.

Nick joined London Central as an apprentice engineer at New Cross in 1988. A number of promotions followed until he became service centre manager at Camberwell for a number of years. He later transferred to New Cross in the same role.

He was acting manager at New Cross last year before taking on his appointment at Docklands.

"This is my biggest challenge to date because it's the biggest garage," said Nick, "but we have an excellent team of engineers and I want to make it number one in terms of performance within the Go-Ahead Group in London."

Camberwell's engineering manager David Clark adds to his responsibilities by taking over Peckham as well. The garage's workshop manager, Belcher Penfold, also extends his duties to Peckham.

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MANDELA WAY IS KEY TO GROWTH

LONDON GENERAL faces its most exciting period of expansion since the turn of the century.

It is opening its second new garage within a year and preparing to take over two huge new routes. In order to meet the requirements of the new contracts, the company is recruiting well over 200 drivers and buying 57 new buses, 25 of which will be articulated vehicles.

On top of that, one of the company's most important routes is being transferred from Stockwell to Mandela Way, the new garage.

The moves, which begin in November and will be completed in February of next year, will increase the number of drivers at Stockwell and Mandela Way from 647 to almost 880 and the number of buses from just over 200 to more than 260.

Stimulating

Stockwell and Mandela Way combined will be among the largest operational units in the capital. The man charged with overseeing the logistics and making sure that services continue to operate to high standards throughout the changes is Stockwell's Colin Opher, who will become general manager of both garages.

He said: "The next few months will certainly be very busy, but also very stimulating with lots of new challenges. We already have much of the team in place and a lot of work has been going on to prepare for the changes. We're all really looking forward to getting on with the job now."



Colin Opher is all set to add Mandela Way to his responsibilities.

The changes kick off early in November when Route 133 transfers from Stockwell to Mandela Way to make way for Route 24, won from Metroline.

Route 24 runs from Pimlico to Hampstead Heath and will be the second service operated by London General to start and finish north of the River Thames.

The service will use 32 new Alexander Dennis Enviro 400 buses, including spares, and require 104 drivers, including those on nights.

Just as staff at Stockwell and Mandela Way settle down, then comes the new year with Route 453 – taken from Selkent – due to start on February 16. A total of 25 new MAL artics and 94 drivers will go straight into the new garage for the service, which plies between Deptford Bridge station and Marylebone station.

Colin said: "Both the 24 and 453 were won in the face of fierce competition. We'll certainly have our work cut out to achieve the targets set by London Buses in terms of performance and value for money."

"However successful we are, we have to be constantly aware of much greater demands made upon all operators by London Buses. Standards are being pushed up all the time and we are all operating on much tighter margins than in the past."

● Former Sutton operating manager Trevor Pirks will take on a similar role at Mandela Way while Stockwell's accident prevention manager Cliff Frost and road manager Martin Bilham will add Mandela Way to their responsibilities.



Winners of the company final at Mandela Way – overall winner Michael Greatley, centre, with his colleagues Kharen Shaheen, from Bexleyheath, and George Anan, from Stockwell.

Trio determined to try again next year

THREE of the best drivers from London General and London Central flew the flag for Go-Ahead in London at the national final of the Bus Driver of the Year competition on September 9.

In order to reach the national final at Blackpool the trio had to compete against 39 of their colleagues at the company's own driver of the year final at Mandela Way in July. This was an achievement in itself as over 100 drivers entered the competition and only the 39 drivers with the best on-bus driving scores qualified.

Merton's Michael Greatley came first at Mandela Way and Bexleyheath's Kharen Shaheen followed him in second place.

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Garage administrator and Merton's employee of the year Dot Pearce faces the spotlight. Known by her colleagues as 'The Oracle', Dot calculates lost mileage and has worked in the industry for four years.

Q Which rule of the road would you introduce?

A Ban all vehicles at all times from bus lanes, and that includes taxis.

Q Which television show would you most like to appear in?

A Deal Or No Deal.

Q What is your favourite sport and which team do you support?

A Football, Spurs.

Q Which character trait do you most like in other people?

A A good sense of humour. People who always have a smile on their face.

Q Which character trait do you least like in other people?

A Grumpiness.

Q Which character trait do you least like about yourself?

A I tend to moan at the engineering manager and he really doesn't deserve it.

Q Your favourite film (any era) and why?

A Gone With The Wind, it's a good traditional romantic drama.

Q Which famous person annoys you the most and why?

A Ken Livingstone. I'm not sure why, I just find him irritating.

Q Your idea of the perfect day is ...?

A Coming to work, no lost mileage. Then I can go home feeling happy.

Q Your favourite pastime?

A Gardening.

Q Describe yourself in five words.

A, Soft, kind, cheerful, patient and reliable. Not sure that others would agree ...

Q If you could change one thing about the world, what would it be?

A Put a stop to all wars.

Q Name one person (dead or alive) you consider to be 'great' and why?

A Emily Parkhurst. Apart from fighting to give women the vote, I think she was concerned about women's rights in general.

Pace hots up as iBus looms

OPERATIONS staff in London General and London Central continue to prepare for the introduction of iBus.

Refurbishment of radio rooms carries on apace as those at New Cross and Stockwell are finished. Camberwell and Bexleyheath radio rooms are completed or soon will be. And work has started at Merton.

London Central is scheduled to be the first of Go-Ahead's two major London operators to go live with the new technology and buses based at New Cross are expected to be converted early in the new year.

Buses at the remaining Central garages are expected to undergo fitment through to April 2008. London General's fleet is expected to begin conversion in April.

iBus is London Buses' state-of-the-art vehicle location technology designed to replace AVL. It offers better radio coverage and uses satellite-based tracking technology (GPS) which can pinpoint the location of a bus.

The introduction of the system throughout the capital is due to be completed by 2009.

Martin Bilham, who has project-managed the preparation of iBus for London General and London Central, said: "There has been some slippage in the timetable, but we are working to ensure we are ready to go when required to do so."

Training for controllers and drivers will begin some weeks before the fitment of iBus equipment to buses.

DRIVER TRAINING (currently programmed as follows):

Waterloo, March 3 to 11; Stockwell, March 5 to 31; Putney, April 1 to 16; Waterside Way, April 15 and 16; Sutton, April 21 to 30; Merton, May 1 to 22.

CONVERSION (currently programmed as follows):

Waterloo April 14 to 22; Stockwell, April 16 to May 12; Putney, May 13 to 28; Waterside Way, May 29 and 30; Sutton, June 2 to 11; Merton, June 12 to July 3.

Driver of the Year

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Stockwell's George Anan came third. All of them were awarded trophies for their achievement and took away £500, £400 and £300 respectively for first, second and third places.

The trio were among 120 of the nation's bus driving elite at Blackpool and although they were unable to get among the prizes, their colleagues and the company's directors expressed their congratulations in getting to the national final.

Managing director John Trayner, who attended the event at Blackpool, said: "Our three drivers have shown tremendous ability and professionalism to reach the national final. They should not be too disappointed they didn't win. They are, after all, among the best in the country and have a right to feel proud of their achievements."

"I am delighted that all three are even now saying they are determined to have another go next year."

Michael, who also won the company final back in 2005, said: "I only decided to enter the competition at the last minute and I did not put myself under any pressure. I approached the national final in the same way. Naturally, I am



Right: Andy Hemper. Below left: Sukchan Sandhu and, below right, Gerald Elkington.



disappointed not to win."

London General's best drivers at garage level at the company final were Gerald Elkington (Waterside Way), Andy Hemper (Sutton) and Sukchan Sandhu (Waterloo).

Key organisers of the Mandela Way company competition were Waterloo base manager Mark Cambridge, driving instructor Colin James and Sutton union secretary John Doyle. Special thanks were given to marshals, caterers and other helpers.

Footballers aim to raise £1,600-plus

FOOTBALLERS from Merton and Sutton garages are hoping to raise well over last year's total of £1,600 for charity this month (September).

Teams from both garages will meet at Tooting and Mitcham United's ground, The Hub, in Bishopsford Road, near St Helier,

to raise money for the Friends of the Neo-Natal Unit at Tooting's St George's Hospital. The group hopes to open a new ward for premature babies.

Match organisers are Merton driver Scott Horney and Merton operating manager Nigel Wood.

Top employees honoured at dazzling summer ball

BEST IN THE BUSINESS

IT WAS the most glittering occasion in the history of London General and London Central ... and it was staged to honour the company's engineering apprentices and those employees nominated for employee of the year.

A total of 52 staff were nominated for employee of the year and 38 attended the summer ball in a special marquee in the grounds of the sumptuous 18th century Addington Palace, near Croydon.

Just six members of staff – three drivers and three representatives from other grades – were given the accolade of employee of the year, but as managing director John Trayner pointed out: "All the nominees are among our elite staff and it was not an easy task narrowing it down to overall winners ... the reality is that you are all winners."

The event, which included presentations and video clips, began with a toast to the company's engineering apprentices.

London General and London Central was one of the first of the capital's bus operators to identify a shortage of skilled engineers to replace those who got promoted or who retired.

Very best

"We decided," said John Trayner, "to tackle this problem at grass roots level and establish our own apprenticeship programme working in tandem with the Institute of the Motor Industry (IMI), the College of North West London and several of our suppliers and contractors."

"This company's scheme is recognised as among the very best and we currently employ more than 20 apprentices."

Presentations were made to Darren Connolly, Nick Field, James Martin and Robert Pitt, four third year apprentices who have completed their Advanced Modern Apprenticeships and have permanent positions in the garages.

Healthy competition is encouraged between apprentices and one was chosen as the top candidate each year.

Luke Wood was chosen as first year apprentice of the year, Gary McNeill the second year's top apprentice and Darren Connolly the third year's top man.

The six overall employee of the year winners were: Waterloo driver Larry Conte, Stockwell driver Nellie Wilkinson, Peckham driver Donovan Williams, New Cross workshop manager Terry Absalom, Bexleyheath SVE Kevin Crane, and Merton garage administrator Dot Pearce.

Those members of staff nominated for employee of the year and who attended were:



Gala night for a group of top employees from London General and London Central.



Recognition for a second group of top staff at the summer ball.

Head office – Debbie Gilding, personnel; Louise Larman, finance.

London General and London Central – driving instructor Arthur Edwards.

London General only (drivers)

Merton – Edward Fengeng-Twum and Kee Wong Shum; Putney – Stuart Blake and Graham Gadd; Stockwell – Felix Boakye, Abdul Raziq and Nellie Wilkinson; Sutton – Gary Hunt and George Kourpa; Waterloo – Larry Conte; Waterside Way – Richard Duke and Danny Tiwari.

London General only (other grades)

Engineering – Andrew Sheead, Merton; admin – Dot Pearce, Merton; base manager (former SGA) Wendy Slater, Waterside Way; controllers Ian Brady, Stockwell, Christopher Hall, Putney, Kevin Morrison, Merton and Steve Young, Sutton.



Engineering apprentices are honoured by the company. They are pictured with chief engineer Richard Harrington and MD John Trayner. Apprentices are, from left, Robert Pitt, Nick Field, James Martin and Darren Connolly.

Leaving after 135 years of service!

THEY'VE got more than 135 years' service between them ... and now four Sutton drivers are hanging up their uniforms for the last time.

They are Peter Smith, Mike O'Connor, Gerry Vincent and George Kourpa.

Strictly speaking, only three of the four are retiring fully. Peter Smith is the longest serving employee with almost 42 years and he is hoping to work part time for the commercial department.

Peter, who started his career as a driver, said the biggest difference to his job over the years was the buses: "Today's vehicles are much easier to drive, but they haven't got the character of the old RTs."

"I remember when it rained there were so many leaks in the cab that the drivers used to say they needed wellies and a raincoat to keep dry. In the winter you could have done with a fur coat as well, it was so cold."

Mike O'Connor has more than 37 years in the industry. He joined after being made redundant from his job as a heating engineer.



Four men starting a new adventure. They are, from left, George Kourpa, Mike O'Connor, Peter Smith and Gerry Vincent.

"I thought I'd give driving a go for a few months while I decided what to do. And suddenly a few months turned into years. The industry just became a way of life. I've always enjoyed the job, the social side and the camaraderie," said Mike.

He started as a driver at Stockwell and moved to Sutton in 1986.

Gerry Vincent will have also put in more than 37 years as a bus driver in

December, when he retires. He started at Kingston, moved to Norbiton and then to Sutton in 1984.

He and his wife Gloria, who retires in April of next year, are planning a trip around the coast of Great Britain in their camper van.

"It's something we've always wanted to do," said Gerry "and hopefully now we'll find the time to do it."

Gerry and Gloria also enjoy bowling,

so they might find competing interests for their time. "We'll have to prioritise," said Gerry.

George Kourpa retired in August after more than 18 years at Sutton as a driver. He came to this country in 1955 from Cyprus and was a textile engineer before starting his career on the buses.

He is the proud owner of lots of safe driving certificates and is frequently commended for his friendliness by his passengers.

George said: "I'll miss the people I work with very much, but not driving because motorists are so intolerant and conditions on the road are not getting any better. I'll miss my regular passengers as well."

Operating manager Derek Barker said: "These men have all given excellent service to the company and the industry as a whole. We wish them all the very best. They will certainly be missed at the garage."

Derek treated the men to a farewell meal. Union secretary John Doyle and rep Tony Merrell joined the party.

Future looks bright as staff take to course for managers

IT APPEARS that the voluntary courses to find future managers have tapped into a rich vein among the company's drivers.

More than 270 applications were received from drivers who wanted to attend the special evening sessions, which began in June.

Organiser, and Camberwell general manager, Bill Roberts said: "Frankly, we were really surprised and delighted at the level of interest. We are only able to take 12 people at a time and because of the demand we are starting a second course this month (September) and another before the end of the year."

Held on Tuesday evenings at Camberwell garage for six weeks, each two-hour session is led by a senior manager and has a theme, such as company finance, disciplinary procedures and so on.

Bill added: "We have many enthusiastic and engaged members of staff and with the

continuing rapid growth of the company, it is essential we recognise individuals and develop their talent.

"But the courses are not just about finding new supervisors and potential managers for the immediate future, we are also preparing for five or 10 years time when people in senior positions now will be promoted, leave or retire."

Although there is no guarantee of becoming a supervisor or an official, people who have attended the courses are in a good position.

Louise Atkin, from Camberwell, who was top of the first class is rewarded with a two-month attachment to the road team as a regulator at Camberwell.

The second placed driver was Guy Street from New Cross and he is currently gaining experience behind the counter at New Cross.

Participants for courses already planned for this year will come from existing applications.

Director congratulates Steve on NVQ success

ENGINEER Steve Norrington loves engines ... so it's probably not surprising that he's picking up awards for his work.

Steve was one of more than 20 of the company's 'mature students' to apply to take their NVQ qualifications some 18 months ago. And he's the first to complete successfully Level 2 in Vehicle Maintenance and Repair.

Engineering director Phil Margrave presented Steve, who works at Camberwell garage, with his certificate in July.

Steve told In General that he'd start Level 3 this month (September): "I understand there's more emphasis on diagnostics in the new qualification, whereas Level 2 concentrated more on mechanical and electrical aspects."

"I'm really pleased to have gained Level 2, but I realise there's still a lot to learn, but I love working on engines and enjoy new challenges."

Before joining London General and London Central, Steve completed his apprenticeship with Skoda and qualified in IT to A Level standard.

Phil Margrave said: "Steve has every right to feel very proud of his achievement because a lot of hard work goes into earning an NVQ. And I'm delighted that he is one of a number of young employees who are so positive about gaining such an important qualification."

If you want to follow in Steve's footsteps, you should contact your local engineering manager.



Steve with one of his three cars, a former London taxi – the others are an Alfa 147 GTA and a Nissan Pulsar GTi.

Progress around the Group

MESSAGE FROM GROUP CHIEF EXECUTIVE KEITH LUDEMAN

IT HAS been a busy period for us all, and a period of growth and success for the Group.

We were delighted to have been awarded the contract to operate the West Midlands rail franchise by the Department for Transport. We are calling it London Midland and it will run from November 11 to September 19, 2015.

Elsewhere around the Group, aviance has taken over the ground handling operations of British Airways at four key airports across the UK. In addition, Gatwick Express services, currently operated by National Express, are to be taken over by Southern from May next year.

Not only have we been successful in growing our businesses, our many efforts have also been recognised in our sectors. We were awarded the National Transport Award for Contribution to Sustainable Transport for our CSR reporting, and Southern has won no less than four awards over the past two months. It has won two Railway Innovation Awards, one for Safety and one for Engineering and Information Technology, as well as a Network Rail Environment Award for Team Contribution and Secure Station status for three of its stations.

New phase

The success doesn't stop there. A total of 11 of Southeastern's stations have been accredited with Secure Station status, and Brighton & Hove has won a Learn Direct Achievement Award for providing training courses for employees through the Government's Learn Direct Scheme.

The Group is never standing still. The Oxford Bus Company is pioneering the first use of a smartcard – 'The Key' – in the Group while Southeastern will shortly enter a new phase in its development. Engineers at Hitachi's Kasado factory in Japan have finished building the first of 29 six-car Class 395 trains. The train will arrive shortly in the UK, where it will undergo further extensive testing. The trains will reduce journey times to London from Kent dramatically, as well as providing high speed services from London to the 2012 Olympic Games.

A lot of hard work has gone into achieving these successes, for which you and your teams are all to be congratulated. However, the hard work must not stop there, especially if we are to make a success of the new rail franchise, identify further opportunities for growth, and to run the business more effectively and efficiently.

Bill Roberts takes over at Docklands

CAMBERWELL general manager Bill Roberts has assumed overall responsibility for Docklands Minibuses.

The change allows Frank Thorpe to be released from his duties to explore other business development opportunities for the company.



Up before the beak – Bob with one of his feathered friends.

Wing commander

IF Bob Sciberras's household continues to expand at its current rate, chances are the service quality inspector will soon need something a lot larger to accommodate his growing family ...

His flock includes an assortment of colourful parrots, chirpy cockatiels and frisky budgerigars, most of which have spent part of their lives in a rescue centre. Each has a name, its own distinctive personality and they're as much a part of the family as any child could be.

The problem is that Bob, by his own admission, is something of a softie when it comes to adopting birds.

"When I see a distressed bird, I just look at its face, my heart melts and I want to take it home with me," said Bob, whose wife Victoria shares his interest.

It all began three years ago when a friend gave Bob a cockatiel that he no longer wanted. He bought the bird a companion and then two years ago, he was asked if he would be interested in adopting a sulphur

Birds of a feather stick together at Bob's home

crested cockatoo living in a bird of prey sanctuary.

"We took on the cockatoo, whose name was Joe-Joe, and then discovered it had mental health problems," Bob explained. "It loved Victoria but it didn't like men or other birds at all. Joe-Joe nearly went back a few times, but we persevered and he has now mellowed with age."

All the birds spend the day in a divided purpose-built aviary measuring 24 square metres, constructed by Bob two years ago. At night, the bigger birds occupy a room in the house, especially set aside for them.

"Birds such as parrots are flocking creatures and they like to be with other birds," said Bob. "If a parrot gets bored or lonely it will pull out all its feathers and that's a very sorry sight. They can become as bald as a supermarket chicken, plucked and ready for

roasting."

No chance of that chez Sciberras. Treated to a diet rich in all the right nutrients, plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, access to the best veterinary services in the county and heaped with oodles of care and attention, the creatures thrive in their adopted home.

One of Bob's birds is a female eclectus with special needs. She has crippled feet and a broken wing, which requires lots of attention and perches of different sizes, mostly home made.

Echo is a bare-eyed cockatoo and Bob said: "Who says white birds can't dance, this one has rhythm and loves dancing, anything from reggae to classical."

When Bob's not around, his birds are kept entertained with toys from Mothercare, charity shops and their favourite – an egg box with a nut hiding inside.

Mary retires from the front desk

ALTHOUGH Mary Brown has retired, she is hoping to keep her hand in and maintain links with the industry as a part time conductor.

Mary, who left her position last month (August) as generalist for London General and London Central at head office, has arranged to do occasional work for the commercial department.

Among her first assignments, even before her official retirement, was conducting a Routemaster used at the Wimbledon tennis championships.

Mary said: "I really enjoy the operational side of the industry and can't wait to do more work."

Instructors call the shots



Hotshots – driving instructors and guests at a paintball venue.

THEIR job demands they are cool, calm and collected, but even driving instructors have to let off steam from time to time ...

And veteran DI Terry Mason has decided that the best way of doing so is to socialise a little more, and during this year the Camberwell-based team has enjoyed go-karting and paintball outings.

Terry said: "We hope to do events like this two or three times a year, but we are also arranging smaller social gatherings like meals out and darts matches with colleagues and partners."

Terry added: "It's important to relax, but we've found that go-karting and paintball have helped us to build a greater team spirit."

Paintballers at the most recent outing were Lawrence Affleck, Brian Aylwin, Dave Bryer, Cliff Darby, Chris Grout, Terry Mason and his son James, Steve Orr and his son James, Christine Quinn, Bernie Rajewski, Tony Sheehan, Dave Weller and Michael Wentworth.

Knights of the road

What the travelling public says about the people who work for London General

MERTON

● ROUTE 200 driver Raymond Ware is praised by Mrs H. Hall for the way he treated her grandmother. Mrs Hall says Raymond was "very polite and friendly". She also points out that her grandmother was using a crutch and was unable to sit down during the journey and that Raymond drove as "smoothly as possible".

● DRIVERS Paul Cooper and Michael James are praised by Reverend Gregory J. Griffiths for being "helpful" when he was accompanying a disabled woman who uses a wheelchair from her home in Clapham to St George's Hospital, Tooting.

● "ALWAYS smiling and always courteous" is how Route 200 driver Steven Mills is described by a "very happy customer".

● A CUSTOMER commends Route 280 driver Andre Cruywagen for his "attitude and the considerate manner in which he drove".

● ROUTE 44 driver Stephen Briant is described as "very nice and very helpful" by a customer.

PUTNEY

● ROUTE 14 driver Benjamin Muhame is said to have handled "a bad situation very well". A crowd of children were behaving badly and "intimidating" passengers on the top deck. Benjamin managed to get them off the bus and told the driver of the following bus that the group was being disruptive.

● STEVE PONTING'S work on Route 14 is described as "exemplary" by passenger Ms L.A. Vine. He is "courteous" and on this occasion was very helpful to a group of German tourists. He also asked people to vacate their seats for the elderly and announced stops during the journey.

● ROUTE 85 driver Bob Hadley

is thanked by passenger Simon Stokes for ensuring that property he inadvertently left on the bus was returned.

● PASSENGER Colin Turner congratulates Route 39 driver Danny Tiwari for always being "happy and polite".

● A PASSENGER praises Shaun Smith's "perfect driving".

● ROUTE 22 driver Shaun Ryan is described as "wonderful" by Mr and Mrs G. Tuckman. They say Shaun was "very cheerful, polite and helpful, even when one passenger was rude and difficult".

STOCKWELL

● PASSENGER Nicola Stockwell describes Route 133 driver David Watson as "polite and friendly". She adds he "drove very well".

SUTTON

● PASSENGER Andrew Harding commends the way in which Route 213 driver Christine Sebi dealt with a group of youths behaving badly.

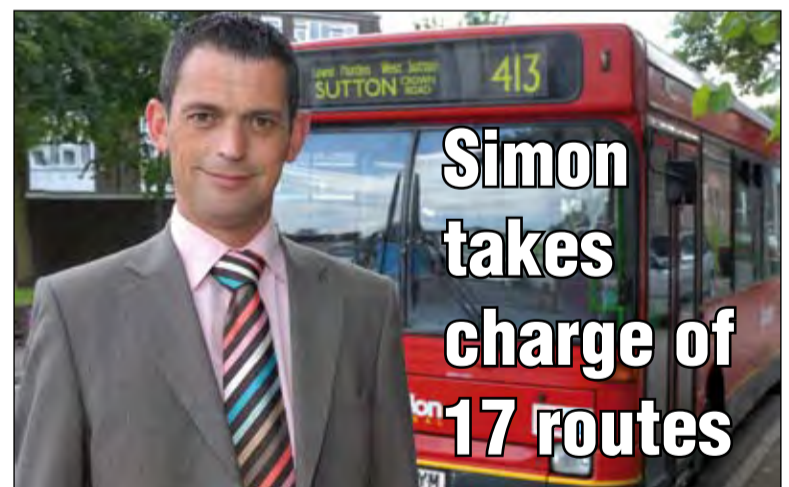
● ROUTE 213 driver Gary Charlton is thanked for the "caring and efficient" way he dealt with a passenger who had fallen down on the bus. The passenger writes that "the incident was in no way related" to Gary and apologises to him for holding up the bus.

WATERLOO

● A PASSENGER compliments Route 507 driver Sulaiman Berhan for being "extremely patient and helpful" to an elderly woman.

WATERSIDE WAY

● ROUTE 485 driver Wayne Cespedes is commended by a passenger for returning her handbag after she mislaid it on his bus. She was equally impressed that he checked her identity before returning it.



Simon has never looked back to his days at the bank.

SIMON BYE began his working life in a bank. But 11 years ago he decided to take his career in a new direction.

His first step in the bus industry was as a driver at Stockwell, and now he has taken on the role of road manager for the 17 routes operating from Merton and Sutton.

Simon became a controller at Stockwell in 1997 and was promoted to senior controller for London General in 2004.

"I've never looked back," he said. "I enjoy the industry immensely and believe there is a lot of potential for people who want to develop their career."

Simon, who has responsibility for 12 controllers and three regulators, said that his primary aim was to ensure routes achieved the performance targets set down by London Buses.

"Initially," he added, "I will be looking specifically at the 219 and 77, both of which run late in the morning peak. There are acute problems with traffic congestion and we'll be looking at ways of minimising the impact of that on our services."

Angie Verrillo, a member of the service quality squad, is covering the vacant senior controller position at Stockwell.