Ravin Bill an' the Night Stur Sparkled

A report on Make Stur Sparkle **2025** by Ravin Bill, rovin' reporter, to whet your appetite for this year's events. For a bird's eye view, we also employed a cub reporter – Raven bill

Prologue: Bill Gets the Word

"Right then, me dears," said I, Ravin Bill, rovin' reporter for the town newsletter, buttonin' me green coat over me mustard waistcoat and settlin' me checked cap against the November nip. Me red neckerchief were flappin' fit to flag down a bus, and me notebook were open afore breakfast. Saturday the twenty-ninth o' November, twenty-twenty-five: free parkin', a townful o' neighbours, and more twinkle promised than frost on a five-bar gate. I had one question writ big at the top o' the page: **What makes Stur sparkle?** "Best go an' find out," I told me pencil. "And don't 'ee dawdle."

A Town Gets Ready

All week, Stur had been polishin' itself up. Ladders leaned against shopfronts. Garlands went over doors. Volunteers tested strings o' lights, then tested 'em again, for a bulb can be a contrary little article when folk be watchin'. At The Exchange, tables were marched into rows. Down by the Railway Garden, Father Christmas's grotto gained a chair, a sack and enough greenery to hide a small pony. At St Mary's, tree after tree arrived to join the festival, each one tellin' its own story in baubles, ribbons and paper stars. "This bain't magic," I wrote. Then I watched three neighbours untangle one enormous knot o' fairy lights without fallin' out. I crossed it through and wrote, "On second thoughts, maybe 'tis."

Market Mornin'



By ten o'clock, The Exchange Christmas Market were hummin' like a kettle near the boil. There were handmade gifts, cards, cakes, jars, knitted wonders and crafty bits that made me say, "I could do that," though all Stur knows I could not. I sampled one morsel for journalistic accuracy, then another to confirm me findings. Outside, folk drifted between the independent shops and eateries, grateful for free parkin' and glad of an excuse to

stop for a natter. Father Christmas received young visitors in his grotto on the Terrace by the Railway Garden, while grown-ups pretended they were only there to supervise. Then I spied a paper angel peepin' from a window—first clue in the town quiz. "Aha!" says I. "News has wings today."

A Red Coat by the Railway Garden

Father Christmas had a queue curling along the Terrace, and every child came out carryin' a secret too large for their face. One small visitor whispered that the reindeer might prefer Dorset hay; another asked whether chimneys counted if they had been swept only "mostly." I kept a straight reporter's face, which is harder than it looks. "No names in the paper," I promised, "but I can report that Stur's wish list be ambitious." Father Christmas gave me a look over his spectacles. "And what do you want, Bill?" "A dry notebook, a hot pasty and the truth," says I. "Though I'll not turn down a mince pie."



The Forest Inside St Mary's

At St Mary's, the Christmas Tree Festival had turned the church into a little indoor forest. Some trees were grand, some funny, some quiet and thoughtful. One wore tiny books; another carried stars made by small hands; another looked as if a rainbow had stopped for Evensong. Volunteers shifted chairs, poured welcome into cups and made ready for the Choral Society. I took off me cap. "A tree outdoors catches weather," I wrote. "A tree in here catches memories." Then a bauble reflected me nose twice its proper size, so I added, "Also, some trees tell fibs."

The Lantern River



By four o’clock, daylight had packed its bag. The Rockit Choir warmed the square while scarves bobbed to the beat and shop windows shone along the street. At ten to five, Father Christmas lifted a mitten and the lantern parade moved from The Exchange toward Market Place. Paper stars, moons, robins and little glowing houses bobbed above woolly hats. One lantern leaned left; its carrier leaned right; between ’em they travelled straight. I trotted alongside, callin’, “Steady, me beauties—keep that river o’ light a-flowin’!” The town seemed to hold its breath as the procession gathered by the dark tree.

Five O’Clock—Click!

Five o’clock sharp. A hand met the switch. **CLICK!** For half a heartbeat, nothin’. Then the great tree woke from root to star. Gold burst upward, green curled round the branches and red winked between ’em. The lamps answered. The windows answered. Faces answered brightest of all. Such a cheer rolled down Church Street that me cap jumped clean off. I caught it on me pencil—professional reflexes. “There!” I shouted. “That bain’t only



electricity. That be everyone seein’ everyone else.” The lanterns carried on toward St Mary’s, where the Choral Society’s welcome floated out to meet ’em.

Tractors in Their Tinsel

After the Rockit Choir had sent its last note friskin’ across the square, a far-off **PARP-PARP!** bounced off the roofs. Heads turned. Dogs sat up. About quarter past six, the first illuminated tractor rolled through town for Salisbury Hospice Charity, great tyres shining and fairy lights curled round every rail. Behind it came another, then another—tractors and other vehicles, twenty-nine in all, dressed in tinsel, stars and even Christmas trees. Their horns answered one another like brass geese. I climbed a safe perch and wrote as fast as me fingers allowed: “Farmyard thunder wi’ a skyful o’ stars!” In one cab, a young passenger waved with both hands; beside the route, volunteers held collection buckets and the crowd filled ’em coin by coin. The parade finished in Station Road car park, where folk could admire the vehicles close up and thank the crews. By the end, £949.45 had been raised for the hospice. “Now there,” I said, underlinin’ the total twice, “be sparkle wi’ a good heart underneath it.”



When the Horns Went Quiet

By seven, late-night shop doors were closin’ one by one. A crumpled programme skittered over the pavement. Somewhere inside The Exchange, Los Pacaminos were gettin’ ready for their eight o’clock show, but outside the last tractor lamps dwindled beyond the car park. I

found a child’s dropped paper star, bent at one point yet still glowing. Its owner came runnin’ back, breathless. “Knew you’d find it, Mr Bill!” “Course,” says I, handin’ it over. “Rovin’ reporters sees everything.” Truth was, half the town had pointed me toward it. That were worth puttin’ in the paper too.

Sparkle Keeps Goin’

“Don’t ’ee think one bright Saturday were the finish,” I warned me readers. On Sunday the Tree Festival opened again, and Advent carols filled St Mary’s in the evenin’. From the first of December, angels took flight and hid in town windows, waitin’ for sharp eyes to find ’em. Friday the fifth brought the Moonlight Swing Band to The Exchange. Then Small Business Saturday on the sixth arrived with free parkin’, cars and bikes in the mornin’, traders and tastings at 1855, crafts at The Exchange, a Choral Society concert at St Mary’s and Rock for Heroes Christmas anthems after dark. On the eleventh came the Ridgeway Singers. Around ’em all were bingo nights, concerts, meetings, makings, greetings and cups o’ summat warm. Every event were a little lamp; together, they made December less dark.

Epilogue: The Deadline

Next mornin’, I sat at me desk with muddy shoes, an empty pie bag and sixteen pages o’ notes. Me editor peered over the top. “Well, Bill? What made Stur sparkle?” I looked at the list: volunteers, traders, singers, lantern-makers, drivers, collectors, churches, venues, families and friends. The answer would not fit in one headline. So I sharpened me pencil and wrote: **STUR SHINES BECAUSE STUR SHOWS UP.** “Bit long,” said the editor. “Bit true,” says I.



Ravin Bill’s Last Word

So I folded me notebook, an’ looked back at Stur all a-glitter. “Lights be pretty,” says I, “but ’tis folk what makes ’em shine. Every lantern carried, every song sung, every shop opened late, every tractor trimmed an’ every coin shared—there be the real sparkle, sure enough.” Then off raven flapped above the Stour, cryin’, “Good night, Stur! Keep ’ee light on for one another!”

Reporter’s note: *This is an imaginative retelling based on the published Make Stur Sparkle 2025 programme and event reporting. The main town celebration took place on 29 November 2025; published reports record the 4.50 p.m. lantern parade, 5 p.m. light switch-on, approximately 6.15 p.m. illuminated vehicle parade, 29 decorated vehicles and £949.45 raised for Salisbury Hospice Charity.*