

Christmas in Stretford & Urmston 2003

Sponsored by Stretford Mall MANCHESTER

# Santa's on the way



Santa left the reindeer at home and relied on shire horses for part of his journey in Stretford's Christmas celebrations last year.



The brass band provides the sound of Yuletide last year.

It will be Jingle Bells all the way on Saturday, November 29 at the Stretford Christmas Festival, which promises to be a fantastic festive gala for everyone to enjoy.

Organisers have pulled out all the stops for this year's event to involve everyone in the community as they hail Santa's arrival from Lapland. Crowds can line the banks of the Bridgewater Canal from The Watchhouse Cruising Club boathouse, near Stretford Cemetery, to Stretford Marina from 9.30am. Here they can buy balloons and wave to Santa as he passes on a barge bedecked with Christmas garlands and decorations donated by Stretford Mall.

Santa will be greeted at the marina by a brass band, cheerleaders, Stretford Pageant Queens and a band of his little helpers to disembark and climb aboard his modern-day sleigh – a decorated float.

The festive spirit will be further reinforced when carol singers from community churches, led by St Matthew's Church, give voice to some traditional favourites.

Crowds of well-wishers can then follow the procession along Moss Road, Derbyshire Road and Park Road, until the parade turns into the main gate of Victoria Park at about 11am, where more seasonal entertainment has been organised by the Christmas Festival Committee, made up of Sale Town Centre Partnership, Stretford Pageant and Friends of Victoria Park.

Santa will make his way to his grotto, where children can pay him a visit and have their picture taken with him and receive a little present. Families can then enjoy a feast of entertainment in the shape of Ted Morley's funfair, face painting, chestnut and hot dog stalls, candy floss and a Craft Corner for children to create their own Christmas decorations.

Victoria Macleod, chairwoman of Stretford Pageant, is thrilled with the plans for the big day and says: "This event ties the whole community together, and we are hoping to bring in the schools as well. The summer festival always ends in Longford Park, so to end the Christmas Festival in Victoria Park ensures that the whole of Stretford is brought together for our community events."

The illuminations will be switched on at Stretford Mall on Saturday, November 22, so remember that the Christmas Festival will take place the following Saturday.