

SALES AND MARKETING REPORT 2025

During the year FOR Sales in some form were in attendance at no less than 23 events, which is as far as I am aware a record for the charity. As, for personal reasons, I had to reduce my commitments throughout the year, this would not have been possible without the sterling efforts of Kath and Norman. So a great big THANK YOU to both of you from me for your continued support.

The events ranged from just a simple table with just a small selection of items, such as when we did the boat trip for the Barby History Society, to the three gazebos plus additional tables we had at the Braunston Historic Show. Other waterway events we attended were Cosgrove and Linslade, where we sold from Raymond, plus Banbury, Brownhills, Huddlesford, Rickmansworth and Saltisford, where the sales stand was ashore. Land based events were mainly in Braunston and Southam.

Sales of our jam and marmalade continued to do well at certain events, as well as in the Braunston Village Cafe, but overall totals were a little down on 2024. Our supplier Nicki will continue to make it for us, and fresh stock will be available by Easter. Although the cost to us is a little higher than last year, we will not be increasing our selling prices for 2026.

Books, another major source of sales income, are ever popular, especially at the Braunston Show in June when we can display all we have available. Whilst there I was given a large number of books by two individuals, which will go into stock for this year. However I can always do with more!

We have, over the years, been donated a wide range of items that we do not have the opportunity to put on sale at shows. However at Braunston we got these out of storage and set up a big "Bargain" table. The sheer number of things sold over the two days was simply amazing, mainly due to the work of Mike I'Anson who excelled in his role as a market trader. Thanks Mike, do come back this year, I'm sure we can unearth another load of goodies for you to sell.

In past (pre Covid) years, we stocked FOR branded mugs and waterway themed tea towels. These have now all been sold, and our previous suppliers are no more. We are hopeful that we can source new stock this year to enhance our sales offering. Suggestions for other items are always welcome, and will be considered by the sales team. We are also currently working on a book which will cover the history of the boats, crews and operators, as well as FOR itself. This is turning out to be a rather lengthy process, and whilst we hoped it could be ready for this year's Braunston Show it may not be possible.

Having lost a number of key helpers in recent years, it has fallen to just a few individuals to man the sales stand at certain events. Braunston is an exception, but even then it is not always possible for people to take time out to see round the show. Sadly there has been a lack of new volunteers coming forward, and we could really do with some new blood. So if any members want to come forward, your help will be greatly appreciated. No previous experience is required, just the willingness to engage with the public. And you can learn on the job alongside an experienced member of the team.

Regrettably there has been little progress in updating our sign boards and a badly damaged one needs replacing. We are also no further forward on a banner for Nutfield. This is mainly because our resources have been focused on boat maintenance, which is always a priority.

In conclusion, my thanks to all, in addition to those already mentioned, for their help on the sales stand, as well as those who source and craft items for us to sell and raise necessary funds.

Brian Seymour.