

FAGUS

Minutes of the 33rd Annual General Meeting of Fagus held at 8pm on Monday 16th February 2026 at the Methodist Hall, Silver Street, Nailsea.

Present:- Mary Payne, Yvonne Wesbroom, Tony Pickett, David Packham, Annie Esler, Jean Packham, Jennie Bligh, Lena Smeaton and 65 members.

Apologies:- Miriam Thornton

1. Chair's opening address:

Welcome to the 2026 AGM.

Our year started with a hilarious talk from Sarah Harris of the Spinning Wheel at our AGM.

In March we welcomed Dominic Hamilton on the History and Restoration of Painswick Rococo Garden. I am sure it inspired many of you to visit. The snowdrop season is a particularly good time to go, although they are investing in every aspect of the garden.

April - Salley Pinney spoke on 'The History of Botanical Illustration'. We heard about her driving forces, that is the wonder of plant life.

May - we were treated to 'Success with Seeds' by our very own Mary Payne. I am sure you were all able to use the knowledge she imparted to achieve a better success rate.

June - Sue Mabberley 'The Invisible Garden'. She spoke about her experience of organically gardening in the Brecon Beacons for over 40 years.

July - our Fagus Social at Hanham Court. A glorious day and garden, great tea and cake enjoyed by over 40 members.

August - Stephen Anderson 'My Favourite Gardens'. They may not have all been your favourites but always good to hear another opinion and why.

September - we welcomed back Bob Brown 'Garden Worthy Ferns'. He runs Cotswold Garden Flowers with his son and is always a knowledgeable speaker. Well worth a visit to his nursery or order plants on line.

October - Jean Vernon explained the balance of nature and introducing the familiar and unfamiliar pollinators, especially bees that live and breed in our gardens. I still need to order my bee tubes.

November - our Special Lecture given by Cleve West on 'The Healing Garden'. He spoke to a packed hall and I believe he was excellent although I was not able to attend.

January - our year finished with Fiona Rose 'In the garden with William Morris'.

Outings arranged several trips - in June there was a trip to Hookshouse Pottery and Miserden. In July a 3 day trip to Manchester to RHS Bridgewater and then Ashwood nurseries and garden. In September Gasper Cottage and Forrest Lodge. I believe all trips were a success.

Fagus has a great committed committee working hard for you, the members. We continue to be inspired by our President Mary Payne and would like to thank her for the excellent job she does as editor of the Fagus Times.

Also thanks to our secretary David Packham; Tony our treasurer who keeps our accounts in order; Jean who keeps membership records in order complete with membership cards; Miriam for arranging a fantastic and varied programme of speakers; Jennie and Lena both help with advertising and publicity posters; Annie is now running the Charity Table; Roger and Wendy - who retires from the committee after several years spent as Speaker Secretary and helping with the zoom lectures during Covid. She will be greatly missed.

Cannot miss out thanking Stephen for managing the Fagus website and David for taking on the role of managing email communications.

Gloves continue to be successfully sold by Heather Bailey and Sue Beek.

Thank you the members for continuing to attend our Fagus lectures and support us. Fagus would not be possible without you.

2. Minutes of the 32nd AGM held on 17th February 2025:

These minutes have been approved by the Committee.

3. Secretary's Report:

The Committee have met four times since the last AGM to manage the business of Fagus.

At the end of 2025 there were 178 members.

Membership fees for the new year will be due from 1st March 2026.

4. Treasurer's Report:

The 2025 year end accounts have been approved by Burton Sweet Accountants for audit and are appended to these minutes.

Community Account

Current account balance on 31st December 2025 was £8,324.96 and £5,010 in the Savings Account. Totalling £13,334.96.

The total held in both accounts on 1st January 2025 was £14,413.89 so a shortfall of £1,078.93 was realised in 2025. As we have a healthy balance in the Savings Account a shortfall of this order can be sustained for the present before we need to increase subscriptions.

Bank charges for the year amounted to £81.67 in 2025 which included the monthly service charge of £4.25, cheques and cash handling charges and card payment commission.

Door takings at meetings totalled £2,327.94 (including. special lecture)
Combined total of hall hire and speaker fees amounted to £5,822.50.

Savings Account

The savings account we held with Lloyds was closed in May 2025. It was a 32 day notice account with a minimum deposit of £10,000, interest 2%. As we needed to access some of the money it was necessary to close the account. We have since opened an instant access account with HTB (Hampshire Trust Bank), interest rate 4% minimum deposit £5,000 and no service charge.

Membership

Membership subscriptions have not been increased in the last 10 years and will not be increased this year. Entry fee to lectures will remain at £2 for members and £5 for visitors.

Member subscriptions totalled £2,751 compared with £2,943 in 2024, a fall in membership of about 11.

Gloves

Income from the glove sales was £493.20 against £423.45 in spend to replenish stocks. Closing stock at year end was valued at £308.00 (sale prices), the aim being to sell gloves at cost price to the advantage of our members.

Charity

£80.90 was collected in 2025 from charity donations. This will be our last donation to Homestart. Our new charity for 2026 will be the Jack Hazeldine Foundation which is a local North Somerset charity that supports children and young people who find life difficult due to problems of anxiety, low confidence, school worries or challenges at home.

Outings

Three trips were run in 2025, 2 single day trips and one three day trip which included a full day at the RHS garden Bridgewater near Manchester. As the club is affiliated to the RHS Fagus members were granted free entry. All trips covered costs and the three day trip produced a surplus which was partly defrayed by giving each participant a £25 garden voucher on return.

Income from participants totalled £19,444.35 for all 3 trips in 2025. Expenditure totalled £18,947.21 including payments to gardens, transport, recce expenses and refunds.

Although monies assigned to Outings are held in the club Community account a separate entry in the account denoted money assigned to Outings. On December 31st 2025 this amounted to £3,879.71 of which £2,475 was money received in deposits for the Shropshire trip planned for June this year.

5. Election of Chairs, Secretary, Treasurer, Membership Secretary and Speaker Secretary

The Secretary informed the meeting that the following single nominations had been received, as follows:-

Chair - Yvonne Wesbroom
Secretary - David Packham
Treasurer - Tony Pickett
Membership Secretary - Jean Packham
Speaker Secretary - Miriam Thornton

6. Election of committee members:

The following nominations had been received for committee members:-

Annie Esler
Lena Smeaton
Jennie Bligh
Roger Harvey

7. President's closing address:

Will it ever stop raining? We had double the January average rainfall last month and already we have exceeded the February average of 65.6mm. Chew Valley Lake was at its lowest on record but surprise, surprise is now full. The snowdrops have tried to put a brave face on it but have been weighed down by the raindrops having bloomed earlier than usual following the mild winter. No snow yet but there is still time.

The RHS has acknowledged that there is a national shortage of Head Gardeners material and we have experienced this at Compton Acres. It took 11 months to find a suitable candidate, but I am delighted with the eventual outcome and will be going down tomorrow now that he has taken up the role.

The hot summer of 2025 did have some advantages. My *Genista aetnensis* (Mount Etna Broom) that is native to the slopes of Mt Etna produced viable seed for the first time and I now have 6 germinated.

We have lots to look forward to in FAGUS in 2026.

Miriam has collected a varied list of speakers, with returns by Nick Wray, Ann Swithenbank and Wildgoose Nurseries.

David Stevens on How Gardens have Changed,

Geoff Stebbings on Hydrangeas,

Charles Cheshire on the Japanese Tea Garden You may recall that Charles Cheshire was the designer of my favourite garden **Morton Hall**. Still the best garden I have ever been to with the highest standard of horticulture. Charles will be talking about **The Japanese Tea Garden**, and I am sure will show pictures of Morton Hall.

We have talks on Long Aston Research Station, Remarkable Plants of the National Trust, and A Year in John's Garden by Nigel Hopes. John's Garden refers to John Massey's glorious garden at Ashwood Nurseries.

The outings group and members are off to Shropshire in June and a coach visit to the garden at Corsley House, near Warminster and Doynton House near Wick.

Parsonage Farm has an impressive range of snowdrops, and a self-drive visit has been arranged for next week.

For July, there is a coach visit to Wildside and The Garden House, both well worth seeing having been under the control of Keith Wiley, a man on a mission, for whom I have huge respect.

Don't forget the **Hardy Plant Society Spring Plant Fair** at Yeo Valley Garden on Saturday 28th March – you need to book if you wish to go in the morning.

I would personally like to thank Yvonne for her leadership and all the committee for their hard work on your behalf, especially those who have submitted articles for the Newsletter. Please try to write something about your favourite plant or garden or even ask me a question.

Finally, my thanks go to you the membership for supporting FAGUS.

8. Any Other Business

There was none received.