

Report from Bookings Administrator for 2025

St John's Hall remained our busiest RTM venue in 2025. As well as varied classes for adults/children – including art/dance/singing/fitness/language/early learning -- it continued to host well-attended counselling and support groups. Though sadly we said goodbye to one group from September due the RTM St John's Alpha Course needing both Hall, kitchen and Church space on Monday evenings. Support groups usually require evening slots for their members' convenience and their needs compete with other adult class hirers who also want space 6-8pm. It is an issue many other community halls face. We continue to have a healthy flow of booking queries, but most children's activity hirers want the *same slots* – weekday late afternoon/early evening – and while we attempt to accommodate all hirers we cannot please everyone. Our voids, like in other Halls, are in the 1-4pm period when children are at school and there is no demand from support groups. Throughout 2025 our neighbour, The Orange Tree Theatre, became a more regular and welcome booker and increasingly filled some of these void mid-afternoon slots for rehearsals and auditions. The Hall is especially used by the Orange Tree's Community outreach director and has hosted theatrical rehearsals and auditions aimed widening the reach of this independent local theatre. Their schools programme and acting labs for all ages, have been hosted in the Hall. This has continued into 2026 – and OT are now a regular Hall booker.

I conducted a **fees review** In Jan-March 2025 and after negotiation, all our Hirers accepted a 6% fees increase which took effect on April 1st, 2025. Our headline rate rose to £37 per hour. We lost only one client – and that was due to a relocation from London. Our income was just above £37,000 for the year 2025 and our outgoings were £10,499. We told hirers at the end of 2025 we would not increase fees in April 2026 – due to the Hall being closed for 16 weeks at the beginning of that year. Some hirers expressed concern about the effect of the closure on their business plans. This was to be expected. But after spending some time explaining the need for a new hall floor, most understood that the closure would then deliver a far superior Hall. We agreed again to freeze fees until January 1st, 2027, due to the later than planned Hall reopening (16th April 2026) and the closure of the hall in the Autumn for 5 weeks due to the Orange Tree production at St John's.

Parties

After a lacklustre year in 2024, parties have not really picked up in 2025 – disappointingly, as advertising posters were put up across Richmond in Jan and Feb 2025 and a notice was placed in the Newsletter. I suspect it was because the Hall decoration has been quite tired, the floor not in great shape and the Wi-Fi unavailable to clients who all ask and expect it. We do not allow water play nor bouncy castles and this puts off some potential hirers. We are considering placing a large temporary banner on the railings at SJD to advertise the newly decorated Hall. We only allow parties on weekend afternoons and they are a low effort source of income which we should aim to grow. Users still very much like **parking** in the one parking space we provide. Some would prefer to use more spaces, but we still don't allow this. The parking permit system we introduced in 2024 still operates well. complaints about parking have stopped so we think the permits will stay in place.

Schools

We have 6 local schools now regularly using RTM churches and they are expanding their bookings year on year. The Vineyard held 3 carol concerts at St Matthias, and the newly opened Thomas's senior school held 2 large services at Christmas and a very large Remembrance Day service – St Matthias and Revd Anne were kept very busy. This year there are plans for yet more services from Radnor House, Kings House School and the Old Vicarage School at St John's and St Mary's.

Concerts

St Johns and St Mary's both hosted concerts by a variety of commercial and independent bookers. But during 2025 there was anecdotal evidence that our flat fee across all three churches of £750 per Saturday concert (market rate for such wonderfully maintained and well connected venues like ours) has been a barrier to more bookings. Some smaller, less commercial groups/performers report that they cannot guarantee enough ticket sales to cover or fees. There has been discussion about this amongst staff and clergy and we are moving away from the flat fee offer in 2026 (starting at St Mary's) towards a more flexible and we hope more attractive itemised pricing system. The hope is this will appeal to bookers who do not need an 8 hour Saturday booking. St Matthias agreed to accept the Richmond Chamber Choir as permanent residents – they rehearse weekly at the church and held their successful Spring concert in March.