



Why I love The Internet Technical Bookshop

It's been said that the luckiest person in life, is the person who has a job they love. A few years ago, I would have strongly disagreed with that statement, but that was before I began spending my time as a volunteer here at *The Internet Technical Bookshop* in sunny Carshalton, South London.

To say that this old converted pub-come bookshop is unique, would be to bring off a masterpiece of understatement... 'Build Your Own Robot' kits sit side by side with stationary, computer parts, Lego, DVDs, and books on a ridiculously eclectic range of subjects, from cats and kittens to advanced computer programming. The place is owned and run by my boss Andrew, a super-clever chap as uniquely cool as is his shop, having more degrees than a compass and yet being so nice that he doesn't show off about his 'super-boffininess' in any way at all.

As fortune would have it, we are located near several local schools, and often have parents and children popping in to say hello and try and occasionally buy some of our pocket money priced presents, while an increasing group of martial arts types pop in on Saturdays to have a nice cup of tea and browse our selection of (often quite rare) martial arts books. Our main aim, though, is to improve literacy amongst the young people in the local area. To that end, we make sure to maintain our selection of children's books for a pound or two each, and are also in the process of setting up some children's reading groups in one of our classrooms to help the locals with their literacy. We hope to be receiving a grant to help with this, as there is certainly interest in the local community. It's a great place to be, and I love spending as much spare time as I have here... saying hello to customers and reading the stock books to review on our website.



The book shop in its original guise as the *Black Dog*

I think that one of the most charming things about our place is that it is the antithesis of the big chain stores (and internet places) prevalent everywhere these days on every High Street; unlike them, we are just a little one-off community shop. What used to

be the bar downstairs is a maze of cool and interesting things to look and play with, and because we want people to enjoy their visit, hard selling simply doesn't happen. Instead of pure capitalism, our little place runs at a loss, subsidised by Andrew's other business interest, *First Technology Transfer* which operates on the upper floor.

Over the years, our building has been a pub, and cafe' amongst other things, but due to the laws of physics, it's always 'lived' at North Street (formerly Station Road), Carshalton; a place that until quite recently was a lovely picturesque village in Surrey, but is now instead a pretty London suburb in the Borough of Sutton. Opening as a pub many years ago, it has also seen use as a hairdressers, travel agents and transport cafe. We are just a few yards down the street from the beautiful Carshalton Ponds, a source of several local rivers for centuries, a site overlooked by a lovely old church, parts of which are over a thousand years old.



Carshalton Ponds

...and...

the waterfall just downstream

But we are not an oasis of cool in a desert of mediocrity. Apart from our little shop, the local area many also offers many others things to visit and see. There is a nature trail, several parks and a wide variety of pubs, with inexpensive local parking available at the town centre car park by the Sainsbury's. Just over the street is *Sassi's*, a lovely place for a snack, open on weekdays... If we get some customers over to Wayne (who runs the place and has just become a dad for the first time) who knows..? Maybe I can get my coffee there on Saturdays too. The bookshop is served by two train lines (Carshalton station is within feet of us) and several bus routes, including the 157, 127 and X26.

One last thing... We are not just for selling books: We also sell robots! In fact our robots kits are so famous that customers have come from far and wide to look at and buy them, some coming all the way from South America! So ultimately, it's the originality, the wide selection of bits and pieces and the combination of wackiness and charm that make me love the Technical Internet Bookshop and Carshalton in general. If you're ever down our way, please feel free to pop in and say hello!

Robert Wrate, September 2014