

Barter Books

When you need to top up your holiday reading matter, Alnwick's Barter Books is the place to go. Housed in a wonderful Victorian railway station, it's a bookshop with a difference. As the name suggests, the shop is run on a swap system. Open an account at the desk, with any books you wish to swap, and a card will be credited with a fair value for the books which you can then redeem against further purchases. In general you'll get around 50% of the price you paid for any books bought in the shop.

But the shop is much more than just a place to browse and buy books. It's a fascinating place to explore, with a model railway running above your head between book stacks, 3 huge murals and gift shop. The Station Buffet serves excellent breakfasts and snacks including Spike Milligan's favourite of eggs, chips and buttered toast. There are four rooms to choose from when eating, including the restored first and third class waiting rooms, but for those in a hurry or on a budget the first book room, the old Station Parcel Room, has an open fire surrounded by comfy chairs and tea/coffee/biscuits from which you help yourself and pay a few pence into an honesty box.

Interestingly, Barter Books was the place that started the Keep Calm trend – an original poster was found in 2000 in a package of old books in the shop. The owners displayed it and were soon asked by customers for copies, since when it has become a worldwide phenomenon.

There is plenty of parking up the ramp to the left of the entrance off the B6346 – fear not, although it looks narrow there is a good big turning area at the top of the ramp. For more information visit Barter Books' excellent web site www.barterbooks.co.uk.

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