



[The Harpington Toad Fanciers' Social](#)

Written by [John Waterhouse](#) , Directed by [David Samuels](#)

Produced by [Nuts & Bolts Theatre](#) , in *Nowt Part of Festival*

Reviewed by [Yvonne Cawley](#) July 2013

Harpington Toad Fanciers' Social is the wonderfully funny and extremely refreshing comedy by John Waterhouse. The Harpington Toad Fanciers' Society had never had a social before... so did they find more toads or maybe true love? Packed with saucy innuendo, double entendres (without being vulgar) and a witty script, this is a little gem of a play that had the audience, and at times the cast, in stitches. It was advertised as a 16+ play as it has adult humour which is probably about right.

I saw this at **The John Cooper Clarke Theatre**, in the **Black Lion** pub in Salford, which is a great venue. Billed as a comedic mix of

Carry On

and

Last of the Summer Wine

-

Oooh err Missus! -

we are introduced to the fantastically quirky characters who make up 'The Harpington Toad Fanciers' Society'. Natasha, the newest member of the Society, has caused a bit of a stir, by suggesting that they have a social evening – something never before experienced by Norman, Alice and Herbert, the Society's only other 3 members. I mean, how will they cope as this type of thing isn't accounted for in their 360-odd page constitution!

The fun takes place at Norman's house who ticks off that he's laid out some crisps (though not too many now), nuts, a can of pop or two from his little 'check list' before his first guest arrives. A real stickler for the rules, and suitably attired in his tank top and cords, Norman is the (self-appointed) Honorary Chair and Founder of the Society and devotee of all Toad and amphibian related activities. He expects all members to do the same and has even devised a little **Toad Mantra** that everyone performs whenever a certain 'Holy Grail' of the toad world is mentioned – classic!

As each guest arrives, we learn a little more about the characters, the workings of the Society and the lengths they go to to keep their love of Toads alive. Natasha (*Keeley Lane*) has a real job on her hands to ensure that they have a fun night, away from

Toad Talk

and as the evening progresses, things begin to 'develop' in ways the other three only dreamed of! I won't spoil it for you.

This hour long laugh-fest, *Adapted and Directed* by **David Samuels**, flowed effortlessly and relentlessly as we were drawn deeper into 'toad territory'! It was a real laugh out loud event, with the audience just totally relaxing and enjoying themselves. This was only achieved by the loveable, likeable and believable characters that came to life on stage and really drew you in.

We have **Norman**, who likes things just so and was played wonderfully and convincingly by

Ian Barlow

. He reminded me of Stu Francis, presenter of Crackerjack, with his 'Oh I could crush a grape' saying! Ian's comic timing and delivery were great.



Promotional video for The Harpington Toad Fanciers' Social