

20 things we learned about democracy in August 2014

 democraticaudit.com /2014/09/01/20-things-we-learned-about-democracy-in-august-2014/

By Democratic Audit UK

2014-9-1

Parliament was in recess throughout August, despite calls for its recall. Even so, none of this meant that British democracy stopped last month, with numerous interesting facts, factoids, and observations revealing themselves.

Sean Kippin of Democratic Audit selects the best and most interesting.

1. Salmond fishing for the Yes-men

Research from Dr Alan Renwick shows that in referendums, the Yes campaign almost always loses support as you approach polling day – which is bad news for Alex Salmond. [Find out more here.](#)



2. Backwards step

The number of female council leaders has fallen from 16.6 per cent in 2004 to 12.3 per cent now, according to the Fawcett Society's Polly Trenow. [Find out more here.](#)



3. What's the story, morning glory?

Morning can last until 3.30pm in the House of Lords, according to the Green Party's Baroness Jenny Jones. [Find out more here.](#)



4. Forward planning

Coalition governments which are formed in advance of elections have better survival prospects, meaning that Nick Clegg, David Cameron, and Ed Miliband ought to perhaps think about getting that awkward conversation out of the way sooner rather than later. [Find out more here.](#)



5. A Magnum of lies

The reason that politicians lie can be explained with reference to an economics analogy featuring ice cream stalls on a beach. [Find out more here.](#)



6. Getting what you pay for

Higher spending on electoral administration generally increases levels of integrity, according to Dr Alistair Clark of Newcastle University. [Find out more here.](#)



7. Stalemate

We could be headed for a General Election outcome in which Labour and Conservative win 294 seats each, the Lib Dems 35, and assorted 'others' 27, according to YouGov's Peter Kellner. [Find out more here.](#)



8. A torrent of tolerance

Racial prejudice is in long-term decline in the UK, according to Dr Rob Ford of Manchester University, who says that research from the British Social Attitudes Survey has been misrepresented. [Find out more here.](#)



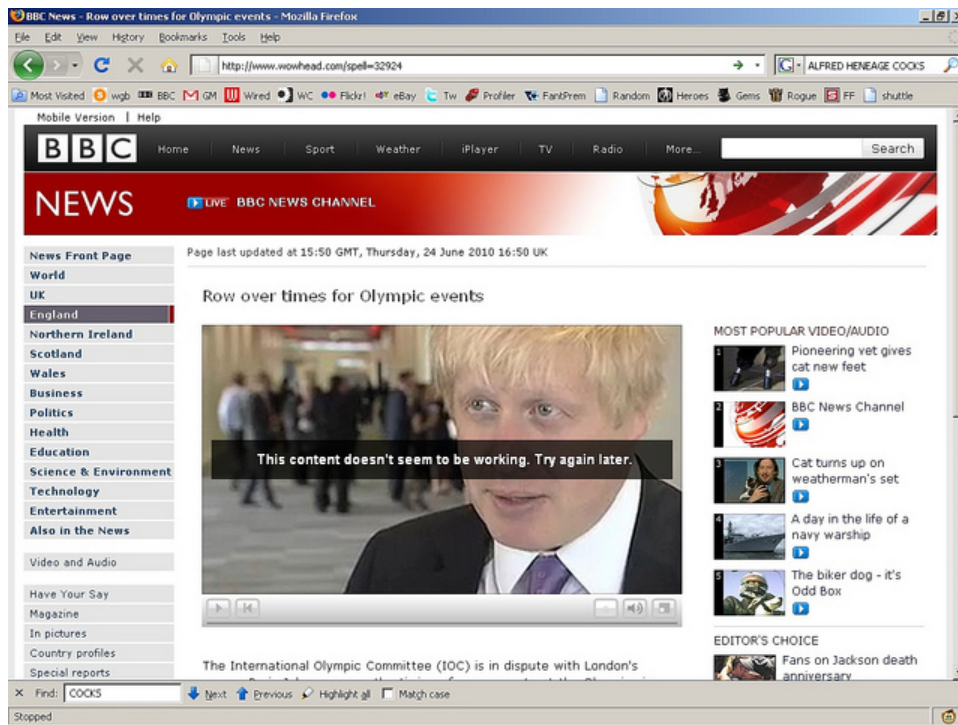
9. Letting sunshine win the day

The list of new Lords nominated by the Conservatives includes six party donors (one of which has given a total of £6.6m to the party) and a defeated MEP. [Find out more here.](#)



10. Flying visit

Boris Johnson has chosen to stand in the Uxbridge constituency, which has as one of its largest employers Heathrow Airport – which he has previously argued should be closed down. [Find out more here.](#)



11. Publicly minded

More people go “dogging” each year than are members of political parties, according to Ben West. [Find out more here.](#)



12. Pants on (bush) fire

48% of the Australian Prime Minister's statements analysed by Politifact Australia can be categorised as either

'mostly false' or 'false'. [Find out more here.](#)



13. Lot-tory winners

Unsurprisingly, lottery wins make people more likely to vote Conservative, according to research carried out by Nattavudh Powdthavee of the University of Melbourne and the London School of Economics and Andrew Oswald of the University of Warwick. [Find out more here.](#)



14. Democratising the dressing room

A former England football captain is in favour of democratising the appointment process for becoming the England

captain. [Find out more here.](#)

15. Kicking the rascals out

Corruption can increase voter participation in politics, at least according to research carried out in Portugal and carried on Democratic Audit and LSE Euopp – European Politics and Policy. [Find out more here.](#)



16. Reg letter day

Newcastle Council has managed to spend £50,000 on electoral registration letters which gave many recipients precisely the wrong information. [Find out more here.](#)



17. Stuck in the extremes with you

Despite what you may think, open primaries actually do very little to increase candidate moderation. [Find out more here.](#)



18. The state I am in

Evidence from America shows that citizens' opinions are represented more equally by elected officials in states that strictly regulate professional lobbying. [Find out more here.](#)



19. Unpopularity contest

A recent by-election to replace the West Midlands departing Police and Crime Commissioner saw turnout slump to 10.3% – the lowest of any large scale election in recent British history. [Find out more here.](#)



20. Semper Fido

Dogs can not only stand for elections in some parts of America, they can win, and be sworn in. Duke the dog, to take a recent example, is now the mayor of the town of Cormorant, Minnesota. [Find out more here.](#)



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