

# Pirates, loonies, one-man bands - it's democracy in action again

With the polls predicting another hung Parliament in three weeks' time, **DICK LUMSDEN** has been looking at some of the more unlikely coalition options

In my lifetime so far, there has been a grand total of 14 general elections. Mostly dull and predictable swinging us from right to left, or left to right, on a semi-regular basis.

Only once before – coincidentally the first election I was eligible to vote – has a sitting prime minister chosen to try to carry on despite having no overall majority in the election. For Ted Heath in 1974, that ended in humiliating failure a few months later.

I'm sure, as we sit here just three weeks away from this year's big vote, that David Cameron will have a whole set of options mapped out in front of him. His advisers will have considered every possibility and be prepared to consider any and every deal in order to keep his trousers in the hot seat.

Or maybe not every possibility. I've been having a bit of a dig around the candidates this year, trying to see if someone, somewhere, will emerge as a new power broker and hold the key to our country's future.

There are a whopping 3,817 candidates fighting this election – drawn from a total of 81 different political parties – plus the independents and poor old John Bercow who is listed simply as "speaker seeking re-election".

Of the candidates, there are 2,767 men, 993 women, one candidate who specifies their gender as "loony" and 56 who have decided that although they want our votes, we have to guess what equipment is tucked inside their underwear.

Sadly, from what I could see, there is no-one from The Tupperware Party, or the Ann Summers Party who might help Mr Cameron form a coalition. But he might now be having talks with The Pirate Party. They are fielding six candidates this time around, and are standing on what they call the UK's first ever "crowd sourced" manifesto... in other words, tell us what you want us to do and we'll stand for



■ After the election, the party leaders might want to look at more unusual alliances in pursuance of forming a government.

Photo: KEN MCKAY/ITV/REX

Unfortunately, The Pirate Party have missed a trick with their branding – instead of a skull and crossbones and all of their candidates wearing eye-patches, it's all a bit dull and boring

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Maybe Mr Cameron's advisers have their eye on Everyone's Party, which claims to be the biggest political party in the world. They justify this by saying the only criteria for membership is "being human" therefore there are 7.2 billion members in the world. Sadly, most of them appear to be too busy for the election and they only have one candidate, so maybe no good for a coalition.

Or maybe he should be looking at The Pluralist Party – a clue in the title surely...there must be more than one of them?

Nope. Just the one...called Dzon, standing in Liverpool. I don't think he's taking it too seriously though. His website was last updated in January 2012 and his Facebook page in September 2014 – although it does have a rather touching picture of Dzon with his

was alive he might be a candidate, if they thought he was right wing enough for them. Even so, they only have two candidates sitting somewhere on the South Coast.

But at least they are transparent about their donors. On the front page of their website, one candidate is publicly thanked by the other for the donation of £500 to get the website built – and not forgetting £25 a month to keep the party running.

The good old Official Monster Raving Loony Party is out in force again this year with 20 candidates, but if previous history is anything to go by, that will be another 20 deposits lost when the polls close.

Among the nationalist parties, most of the attention has been focused on the Scottish National Party, and their threat north of the border to sweep the boards. It is unlikely that Mr Cameron's team would consider them as voting allies, but you never know.

It would be a lot more entertaining though, if he was to side with Yorkshire First, or The North East Party, or Rochdale First, or Lincolnshire Independents or even the Guildford Greenbelt Group.

Whatever happens on May 7 we can be sure that democracy will triumph once again, as it always does in British elections.

Regardless of funny costumes, weird headgear and unpronounceable names, everyone standing will have a fair



■ Unlike the Landseer Players' version of Robinson Crusoe, (piratical duo Capt Jack Spanner and Bosun Black-eyed Bess show here) The Pirate Party does not insist on eye-patches.

Photo: CONTRIBUTED

Then the heavyweight teams will retire behind closed doors and agree the deals that will keep the wheels of Government turning – just as if we'd never even bothered to vote.

Whoever you choose, make sure you vote on May 7. Keep democracy alive.

■ Dick Lumsden is managing