



Political Notebook by George Pascoe-Watson

I've just had a lengthy phone call with a former Labour minister who said quite candidly: "I still expect Cameron will get a majority".

This wasn't a Labour figure playing down expectations for Gordon Brown.

It was someone whose judgment I have long trusted and who genuinely has factored in a Conservative working majority on May 7.

He and others like him could still be wrong. But it's important to reflect this remains a strongly-held view as people try to predict the outcome.

So why, when all the polls seem to suggest a hung Parliament, are the experts still convinced David Cameron will be Britain's next Prime Minister?

Many political insiders believe the general election X-factor campaign will jolt to a sudden halt on polling day as the nation collectively realizes the fun is over - and a serious choice must be made.

It's what they call in politics "wobbly pencil syndrome" when voters, in the privacy of the ballot booth, hesitate before taking a gamble with an unknown and put an "x" in the box of the serious Prime Ministerial candidate's party.

The polls seem to be clear on one thing - that Gordon Brown's ability to win the election are fast receding.

Sure, there's still a chance that Labour could cling to power if the Tories cannot reach the magic 117 extra seats they must win on the night.

But as I've pointed out before, Mr Cameron doesn't need the map of Britain to turn blue to seize the keys to number 10.

He needs to win crucial marginal seats off LibDems and Labour MPs in certain parts of the country - the south west of England, parts of London and the north of England.

Once again, this Sunday's newspapers will be crucial reading.

A rash of opinion polls will give us a far more accurate snapshot of how the parties are lying less than a fortnight before polling day.

The dust will have settled after Thursday's Sky News debate and we'll see just how well Nick Clegg's surge is surviving - whether, as Peter Kellner says, it's a bubble or a bandwagon.

No one can know. That's the beauty and the curse of this general election.

Those who like to plan ahead cannot be certain of the outcome - and Britain could yet be ruled by a minority government and face a second election this year, or even an official coalition administration.

And whatever those polls say on Sunday, don't forget, there's still another chance for all three leaders to deliver the knockout blow - or receive it - next Thursday on the BBC.

Without it, it's hard to see how any newspaper can make an accurate prediction on the night.

Join me in the build-up to the election on Twitter - http://twitter.com/gpw_portland