

# Counting Edwards

The intricacies of history deliver some fantastically strange quirks. I particularly enjoy the ones that are deeply counter intuitive, for example the fact that Captain Bligh's rank during the 1789 mutiny on HMS Bounty was **not** "Captain". Or the fact that the "October Revolution" in Russia actually took place during November. Or the fact that despite there being a Pope John XXI, XXII and possibly two Pope John XXIII's the Catholic church never actually had a Pope John XX.

One of my favourites of those type of facts has to do with the number of British kings called "Edward" up to and including Edward the Eighth. How many do you think there were?

Well, of course, the answer to this question is clearly different for the distinct parts of the UK. Assuming that Edward Baliol doesn't count the first King of Scotland called Edward was (rather confusingly) Edward VII, so the answer in Scotland is two. In Northern Ireland I suspect the number is three. We

can remove that type of uncertainty by changing the question, "How many kings of *England* were called Edward, up to and including Edward the Eighth?". Rather surprisingly even answering that apparently simple question is harder than expected, it is either ten or eleven depending on whether you accept Edward the Elder's claims (which most historians don't). This is all to do with the fact that Edward the First spoke French and believed that only kings that spoke French counted (British history is full of that type of thing).

I've also seen this same issue occur with apparently simple questions in the E&P world as well. I was once asked to report what proportion of the wells owned by a particular company had "valid completion diagrams" on file. The first thing to note is that any time someone uses a word like "valid", or "correct", or "accurate", you'd better get them to actually write down exactly what they mean by it. So it proved in this case, as far as the drillers were concerned a completion diagram was "valid" if it was the one they put into the "End of Well Report". In contrast the operations guys only considered a diagram valid if it included a notation of the current state of the various adjustable elements such as shutters and valves (I apologise for any misuse of these terms, I am not an expert). So not only did I have to ferret around the various databases and shared folders to find the diagrams, I had conflicting definitions of whether each one I found actually counted. But, even worse than that, the different stakeholders also had different definitions of what a "well" was. By combining a choice about the number of wells with a choice about the definition of the word "valid" I could report any one of four, very different, final numbers. In the end I went to the project's sponsor and asked which of the four number he would prefer.

Weirdly I believe the only part of the UK that has actually had eight kings called Edward is Wales, which I am absolutely certain would deeply annoy anyone who speaks Welsh.

