

THE TIMES

Friday July 6 2018 | thetimes.co.uk | No 72580

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Henry Winter inside the England camp **The Game**



Police search for poison syringe as concern grows in Salisbury

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A couple poisoned by a nerve agent are likely to have come into contact with a syringe used in the attack on a Russian spy and his daughter in Salisbury.

Last night counterterrorism police were searching two properties for a

syringe or other instrument believed to have been used to contaminate Sergei and Yulia Skripal with novichok in March. The failure to find it has raised concern that it could harm more people after Charlie Rowley, 45, and Dawn Sturgess, 44, collapsed on Saturday.

The search is understood to be focused on a hostel in Salisbury where Ms Sturgess, who has an alcohol prob-

lem, lived and a flat in the nearby town of Amesbury occupied by Mr Rowley, a heroin addict. The hostel was evacuated yesterday, a day after police declared a major incident.

Police have cordoned off three other sites in Salisbury and Amesbury frequented by one or both of the couple in the 24 hours before they became critically ill. Police believe these locations

could also contain the instrument used on the Skripals, who spent weeks in hospital before being discharged.

Kate Pritchard, chief constable of Wiltshire police, failed to offer an assurance yesterday that there was no undisclosed novichok in the area. "It is far too early to go into any information and detail but the chronology of events is clearly a key line of inquiry for our

colleagues in the counterterrorism team," he said.

Yesterday Sajid Javid, the home secretary, accused Russia of using the UK as a "dumping ground for poison" as he called on the Kremlin to explain the second nerve agent incident on British soil in four months. In the Commons Mr Javid said the "eyes of the world" *Continued on page 2, col 3*

Rebels face down May over Brexit trade deal

Seven cabinet ministers to oppose PM's plans

Sam Coates Deputy Political Editor
Oliver Wright, Francis Elliott

Theresa May faces the worst rebellion of her leadership today as cabinet Brexiteers attempt to force her to push for a harder exit from the European Union than she is planning.

Last night seven cabinet Brexiteers held closed talks at the Foreign Office to discuss their strategy before today's meeting at Chequers, at which Mrs May hoped to persuade the whole cabinet to sign off on her Brexit plans.

One option could be to formally say they are rejecting the paper put forward by the prime minister and confront her with an alternative for a harder exit based on the deal that Brussels has negotiated with Canada.

Hardline Leave supporters were horrified to find out this week that Mrs May was preparing to water down her original proposals and in effect keep Britain in parts of the single market.

According to a proposal leaked to *The Times*, the prime minister wants to buy off Brexiteers by reasserting her commitment to end free movement. She will concede that this means that Britain will no longer be in the single market for services, which accounts for 80 per cent of the economy.

Mrs May will not spell out how she intends to replace free movement, however, in a move causing suspicion among her critics that she may effectively go back on her word in the autumn. A separate government docu-

ment leaked to *The Spectator* conceded that Mrs May's plan would prevent the UK from striking a comprehensive free-trade deal with the United States.

Until now Downing Street has maintained the illusion that Britain can sign significant trade deals while also maintaining full access to EU markets.

Mrs May's plan would enable regulatory alignment with Europe — avoiding a hard border with Ireland — and also a trade deal with the US.

The Brexiteer group intend to confront Mrs May today with a plan for her to stick to her promise to fully leave the single market and customs union and negotiate a Canada-style free-trade deal. "They believe they can shape things," a senior aide said.

An agreement modelled on the deal between Canada and the EU would mean the removal of the majority of customs duties between the UK and Europe. There would be hundreds of exceptions, however, and there would be limits on access for British companies trading in the bloc.

Crucially for Brexiteers, this type of deal would not oblige Britain to sign up to any EU rules or regulations or abide by rulings of the European Court of Justice. The plan was devised at what was believed to be the first time that senior cabinet Brexiteers — Boris Johnson, David Davis, Michael Gove, Liam Fox, Andrea Leadsom, Penny Mordaunt and Esther McVey — have met alone.

However, in the first success for Mrs *Continued on page 6, col 1*



Theresa May with Angela Merkel in Berlin on the eve of the Chequers meeting that the prime minister hopes will result in cabinet backing for her Brexit plans

Baby Trump balloon will fly over London next week during his visit to the capital after Sadiq Khan approved a request for its use by protesters

Lacy Fisher
Chief Political Correspondent

A giant balloon in the form of President Trump wearing a nappy will fly over London next week during his visit to the capital after Sadiq Khan approved a request for its use by protesters.

Mr Khan, the mayor of London, who has clashed with Mr Trump over Islamophobia and terrorism, said that he respected the right of Britons to engage in peaceful protest.

Activists had raised more than £17,300 by last night to fund the balloon, which is a 6m-high orange model of Mr Trump "with a malevolent face and tiny hands".

Nigel Farage, the former UKIP leader and an ally of Mr Trump, called it the "biggest insult to a sitting US president ever". Mr Trump is said to have been concerned about mass protests, which led to speculation that this was behind the cancellation of an earlier trip to Britain to open the new US embassy.

Thousands of people had signed a petition calling on the Greater London Authority to grant permission for the blimp. Its flight will coincide with a "Stop Trump" demonstration next Friday, which about 50,000 people are expected to attend.

Trade unions and other campaign groups have organised protests to greet the president at other venues thought to be on his itinerary during his three-day working trip which begins on Thursday. These include Benham Palace in Oxfordshire and the Turnberry golf resort he owns in Ayrshire.

A source close to Mr Khan insisted the approval for the balloons use was "not an F-you to Trump, it's that we don't have any grounds to ban it". Council rules state that it must remain tethered to the ground at all times and cannot rise above 30 metres. Parliament Square Garden will be used as a tether point. A spokesman for the mayor said he "supports the right to peaceful protest and understands that this can take many different forms". *Trump's town hall meeting, page 12*
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LUXURY

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The piano nobile, or bel étage, was the principal floor of a grand house, where the nobility lorded over the hot politeness. The first floor, with high ceilings and floor-to-ceiling windows, was where the main reception and bedrooms were located in Georgian townhouses, above the noise, smells and distractions of the street.

There is a trend for restoring these rooms, with their ornate cornicing and grand fireplaces, to their former grandeur and also for mimicking the style in modern homes as an antidote to large open-plan family spaces.

Alex Holden, the managing director of Oliver Burns, an interior design practice, says: "We do a lot of work for people who live in garden squares in Belgravia and Mayfair (central London), where there is a lot of traditional architecture. They often want casual entertaining or family spaces on the ground floor and make the first floor a more formal area, with Versailles timber flooring, a grand fireplace, maybe a piano, and some nice artwork: a traditional drawing room, an adult place, with no television. Often these first-floor spaces have not been treated sympathetically and we restore the original features. We are doing this now on a project on Sloane Square (in Chelsea, west London)."

Mat Snelling, the director of the architectural division of Chesneys, a fireplace and architectural specialist, is often called in to renovate or recreate original features of the piano nobile. He says: "These rooms have the best views, greater ceiling heights, the best architectural moldings and cornicing, and the grandest fireplaces. There were often lifts, sweeping staircases up to the drawing room on the first floor, the staircases beyond were less grand, there was a definite hierarchy."

The piano nobile was common across the country, although today they are perhaps most notable in places where large numbers of Georgian houses remain, such as London, Cheltenham in Gloucestershire, Bath in Somerset, Tunbridge Wells in Kent and Edinburgh.

David Macdonald, a partner at the Bath office of Carter Jonas, an estate agency, says: "The piano nobile is an enduring characteristic of Bath's property landscape. Some of its Georgian heritage, many of Bath's original townhouses retain a prominent floor, traditionally on the first storey, away from the basement quarters of the staff and the entrance level on the ground floor."

Synonymous with Jane Austen's era of socialising and entertaining, the piano nobile was often where the gentry would congregate and catch up on the latest gossip and scandal. Those vast floor-to-ceiling windows, often 4m high, were installed as much to retain a knowing eye on the neighbours as they were to enjoy views over the square below and an inflow of natural light.

"In many regards, piano nobile is waning as a term — architectural connoisseurs aside — but buyer demand and appetite for a spacious first-floor drawing room is stronger than ever, particularly among downsizers moving into Bath from their sprawling rectories in the countryside," he says.

Developers have sensed that the demand is growing and are increasingly placing their most prestigious apartments on the piano nobile level. At Mayfair Park Residences, near Hyde Park in central London, the developer Clivedale is retaining the façade of a row of Georgian townhouses, but building modern apartments behind in part of the scheme. Feed Scarlett, a director at



The reception room in a piano nobile apartment in Avebury Mansions, Muswell Hill, north London. It is on sale for £2 million through the developer Hill

Moving up: return of the piano nobile

Where is the smartest place to entertain? The room with the best views — which is on the first floor, reports Carol Lewis



A duplex apartment in Northacre's Lancaster Gate development in west London and, right, the piano nobile in a flat in Baywater, west London, which is on the market for £5.25 million with Sotheby's International Realty



A new-build house with a piano nobile in Notting Hill, west London, is on sale for £25 million through Rokstone

Clivedale, says: "The apartment on the piano nobile is the most prestigious, apart from the penthouse. We have respected the original proportions and it has high ceilings, up to 4m, in the main living areas and master bedroom." The four-bedroom piano nobile apartment is on the market for £262 million.

At Northacre's Number 1 Palace Street development, which neighbours Buckingham Palace in Westminster, the design director Orlando Rodriguez has created a series of apartments in the piano nobile levels across five buildings, which range from a restored Italian Renaissance hotel from the 1860s to a new-build apartment block. Prices in the development range from £1895 million for a one-bedroom apartment up to £27 million for a five-bedroom home.

"In the Buckingham Gate building you can clearly see where the large windows of the piano nobile are, with the smaller

windows above and below. We did six months research and are putting it back to how it was before it was used as government offices.

"There are up to 4.7m-high ceilings on the piano nobile and we are reinstating the fireplaces and cornicing. The apartments on the piano nobile are definitely the grandest in the development. It's not only the old buildings, though — in Palace Street we are taking a modern interpretation, with the new-build facade linking in with the older ones around it, and with traditional proportions, but a more minimalist design inside."

The company are hoping that the apartments will be as popular as those in the Lancasters in Baywater, in which they took a similar approach, building apartments behind a retained facade of 15 stucco-fronted houses in 2011.

Berkeley Homes has taken this one step further, building modern townhouses at its Royal Wells Park development in Kent, with the main sitting room on the first floor (prices starting at £795,000 for a three-bedroom house).

Peter Smith, the managing director of Berkeley Homes Eastern Counties, says: "Many houses feature a formal living room on the first floor, inspired by the grand Regency-era houses of Tunbridge Wells. Combining with tradition, these rooms are designed to maximise natural light, incorporating French doors that lead to a generous balcony. The added height that comes with being on the first floor means these rooms enjoy some of the best views."

Mark Lawson, a partner at the Buying Solution, a buying agency, says: "Developers and architects are constantly being challenged to create something out of the ordinary, with a nod to tradition and heritage. A piano nobile can be practical and aesthetically pleasing. Nowadays day-to-day entertainment areas such as cinemas, bowling alleys, gyms and swimming pools are often positioned on a lower-ground floor."

"An approach upstairs to a statement main floor level for the reception rooms and a master suite can look extremely impressive in a grand residence. The raised level provides longer views, which will further enhance the design and enjoyment of the main areas, which after all are the most used rooms and where the owners like to entertain and impress."

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