Joining Some Dots on the Skripal Case
Part 1 – An Official Story That Doesn’t Hold Water

In the aftermath of the poisoning of Sergei and Yulia Skripal, I asked a lot of questions on my blog (www.theblogmire.com) in relation to the case. I did so for a number of reasons: firstly, the rush to judgement made by the British Government seemed to me to be suspicious and a plain violation of the rule of law, which if it means anything, means that you investigate first, sentence afterwards. Secondly, the case put forward by the British Government simply did not seem to add up. And thirdly, as a Salisbury resident, the incident was practically on my doorstep, and as a writer on all sorts of social, cultural, and political issues, I felt I had some duty to ask questions that few seemed to be asking.

Having asked these questions, I wanted to go a bit further and to join some dots together around the case. I did this over a series of six parts, which I have then put together in this report. When I talk about joining dots together, please note that what I am not attempting to do is state anything conclusively. Rather, I am simply advancing a theory, based on what I have observed in the case, and I do so in the full knowledge that there may well be things I have missed, facts which I am as yet unaware of, and other facts which are still to be revealed.

But before any dots can be joined, there is a question that must first be asked: Why is a theory needed in the first place? It’s not as if there isn’t an official one out there. Indeed there is. In which case, why the need for another theory to explain what happened?

But before any dots can be joined, there is a question that must first be asked: Why is a theory needed in the first place? It’s not as if there isn’t an official one out there. Indeed there is. In which case, why the need for another theory to explain what happened? As mentioned above, it is because the official story, put forward by the British Government, is wholly lacking in credibility. And so attempting to come up with another theory of what happened has nothing to do with advancing what is usually called a “conspiracy theory”. If the claims of the official story did match the facts, then advancing an entirely different theory could well be seen as a conspiracy theory. But since the claims made by the British Government and in the compliant media do not stack up, this is simply a case of seeking an alternative theory that tries to make more sense of the known facts.

But what is it about the Government story that makes it lack credibility? There are a number of things, but let’s just keep this simple. Let’s begin by looking at what it alleges. This can best be summed up by the words of the British Prime Minister, Theresa May, in the statement she made to the House of Commons on 14th March 2018:

“Mr Speaker, on Monday I set out that Mr Skripal and his daughter were poisoned with a Novichok: a military grade nerve agent developed by Russia. Based on this capability, combined with their record of conducting state sponsored assassinations – including against former intelligence officers whom they regard as legitimate targets – the UK government concluded it was highly likely that Russia was responsible for this reckless and despicable act. And there were only two plausible explanations.

Either this was a direct act by the Russian State against our country. Or conceivably, the Russian government could have lost control of a military-grade nerve agent and allowed it to get into the hands of others.”

Leaving aside Mrs May’s allegations for a moment, any impartial observer would immediately notice something odd about this. Her statement was made on 14th March. This was just 10 days since the Skripals were poisoned. At that time, the investigation had hardly begun, and had not yet established any of the following basic facts:
• Where the Skripals were poisoned?
• When the Skripals were poisoned?
• How they were poisoned?
• Who it was that poisoned them?

In other words, she reached conclusions before the establishing of facts, and it goes without saying that this is the very opposite of a rational approach. Indeed, as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle warned us through his most famous creation, Sherlock Holmes:

“It is a capital mistake to theorise before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”

But what of her actual claims? The statement that Russia has a record of conducting state-sponsored assassinations is entirely irrelevant to establishing guilt in this case. Past behaviour can be useful evidence to support a case, but guilt must always be proved on the basis of the facts and evidence in the case at hand, and on them alone. Anything else is simply dangerous and wrong.

Which means that the Government’s case essentially relies on just two parts:

1. That Mr Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, along with Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, were poisoned by the military grade nerve agent, A-234 (one of the so-called “Novichok” nerve agents).
2. That because this substance was developed in Russia (actually the Soviet Union), it therefore must have originated from that country.

However, both of these apparent facts are demonstrably untrue.

To take the second point first, it has now been proven beyond any doubt whatsoever that a number of other countries have either produced the substance, or know how to produce it. The Czech Government has admitted producing a small quantity of the closely related substance, A-230; Iran has produced Novichok, which it registered with the OPCW; The German Intelligence Agency, BND, was given the formula back in the 1990s, and they shared it with a number of other NATO countries, including the US and UK. The Edgewood Chemical and Biological Defense Command in Maryland, USA, recorded the formula back in 1998.

What is more, as the Moon of Alabama website points out, David Collum, Professor of Organic Chemistry at Cornell University has stated that any credible organic chemist could make Novichok nerve agents.

All of which means that the claim that the poison must have come from Russia is demonstrably untrue.

But if analysis of that second claim shows the British Government’s theory to be somewhat dodgy, scrutiny of the first shows it to be entirely false. Given the toxicity of A-234, being around 5-8 times more toxic than VX (some reports state it as being 10 times more toxic), had the Skripals come into contact with it on the door handle of Mr Skripal’s house, as is alleged, one of two things would have occurred:

a) They would either have died within a few minutes of coming into contact with it or
b) In the remote possibility that they had survived, they would have suffered for the rest of their short lives from irreparable damage to their central nervous system, with a number of chronic health issues, such as cirrhosis, toxic hepatitis, and epilepsy (see here for details of what I understand to be the only known survivor of poisoning by this substance, Andrei Zheleznyakov).
What they would not have done is spent the next four hours swanning around Salisbury, going for a drink and then for a meal in a restaurant. What they would not have done is to exhibit symptoms closer to having been poisoned by a hallucinogenic than a military grade nerve agent. And they most certainly would not have collapsed at exactly the same time as each other, four hours later, after showing no previous signs of illness in the restaurant.

Yet as it is, not only are the Skripals and D.S. Bailey still alive, but none have suffered irreparable damage to their nervous system. In fact, in her conversation with her cousin, Viktoria, on 5th April, Yulia Skripal specifically made mention that “everyone’s health is fine, there are no irreparable things”.

Given that this is so, it is entirely rational to come to the following conclusion:

*The claim that Sergei Skripal, Yulia Skripal and D.S. Bailey were poisoned by A-234, which is one of the most deadly nerve agents known to man, and which either kills or leaves its victims with irreparable damage, is demonstrably untrue.*

Having dealt with the official story, I want in Part 2 to deal with what I believe to be some of the most interesting clues in this case, each of which is being ignored or swept under the carpet.
Part 2 – Four “Invisible” Clues

Having stated why I believe the official story does not hold water, I want in this piece to take a look at four important aspects of the case. However, what is particularly remarkable about them is not so much the aspects themselves, but rather the fact that they seem to have been either:

1. Ignored altogether or
2. Quietly forgotten

Yet in each instance they are clearly significant aspects, and so the fact that they are being ignored or forgotten, together with the official story being implausible, only goes to arouse suspicions that they may be crucial pointers to what really happened on 4th March.

Below are four of what I would consider the most important aspects that fit into this category:

The Invisible Mr Miller

Three days after the Salisbury incident, the Daily Telegraph published an article which included the following details:

“A security consultant who has worked for the company that compiled the controversial dossier on Donald Trump was close to the Russian double agent poisoned last weekend, it has been claimed. The consultant, who The Telegraph is declining to identify, lived close to Col Skripal and is understood to have known him for some time. Col Skripal, who is in intensive care and fighting for his life after an assassination attempt on Sunday, was recruited by MI6 when he worked for the British embassy in Estonia, according to the FSB, the Russian intelligence agency.”

The security consultant, whom the Daily Telegraph declined to identify, was not only the man who recruited Mr Skripal for MI6 in 1995, but was also his “handler” in Salisbury (which was presumably the reason that Mr Skripal was settled there).

We also know a number of other interesting facts: That the two men met regularly in a restaurant in the City; that Mr Skripal was still working for British Intelligence; and that the company that the handler was working for was Orbis Business Intelligence, the private firm owned by the ex-MI6 officer, Christopher Steele, who is said to have “authored” the so-called “Trump Dossier”.

This is obviously all highly relevant to the case. And yet just a day after that piece appeared in The Daily Telegraph (and perhaps because of it), the British Government slapped a D-notice on all reporting in the British media of the handler and his connection to Mr Skripal. This included not naming him, but of course D-Notices only apply to domestic media, and in any case by that time CNN had in fact named him as Pablo Miller.

All of the information above is out there in public. And yet the British Government has banned the media from discussing it further. That is indeed very odd, not least of which because the media could, if they so wished, easily use the connections between Mr Skripal, Mr Miller and Mr Steele as a reason to bolster the official narrative (I’m not saying that it would be credible, but it doesn’t take too much of a leap of the imagination to see the headlines appearing in the compliant media: “Did Putin want Skripal dead because he knew too much about the Trump/Russia collusion?”).
Yet, the fact that there is radio silence on these connections is bound to raise questions as to their significance, and whether they point to another motive entirely behind this case.

**The Invisible People From the Market Walk**

In the first few days after the poisoning, much was made of two people who were seen walking through the Market Walk, in the direction of the bench where Sergei and Yulia Skripal were poisoned. According to the CCTV camera, this was at 15:47 on 4th March, which was approximately 16 minutes before one witness said she saw them collapsed on the park bench.

Many reports at first claimed that this pair, seen on the image at the top of this piece, were the Skripals. Yet although the image and the brief footage is not particularly clear, what is clear is that this most certainly was not Sergei and Yulia Skripal. I am not 100% sure whether the person nearest the camera is a male or female. He/she looks very clearly female to me, but I know some people who have disagreed with this and are convinced by the way that he/she walks and his/her build, that it is a man. Yet one thing is for sure: whoever this person is, it is not Yulia Skripal.

Of course, these two may not be important to the case at all. Yet given the next point below, I’d say that at the very least they are “persons of interest”. And yet, so far as I know, there was no ongoing call for information about who they might be, and certainly no national manhunt. If they have been found and eliminated from enquiries, the media, which had published pictures of them, had a duty to inform the public of this in a satisfactory way. Yet to my knowledge, they did not do so, but instead went very quiet about them. Indeed, if you type in some combination of CCTV, Skripals, Market Walk into a search engine, you are unlikely to find any references to them in the media after about 10th March. One might be tempted to think that their very existence has been quietly “forgotten”.

**The Invisible Red Bag**

In the CCTV footage mentioned above, the person nearest the camera, who is not Yulia Skripal, is seen carrying a red bag. This is very interesting for a couple of reasons:

Firstly, one of the witnesses had this to say about the female she saw on the bench:

“She was slumped over on the man’s shoulder. To be honest, I thought they might be homeless but they were perhaps better dressed. I just thought this is weird, especially as she was clearly quite a bit younger than him. She had a red bag at her feet.”

Secondly, that witness testimony is confirmed by a rather long-range photograph which appeared in a number of places. In the Evening Standard, it is accompanied by the following caption:

“Police put a red bag inside a police evidence bag immediately after the nerve agent attack on a Russian spy. Officers previously issued CCTV of a woman clutching a red bag.”

The red bag is therefore a very significant piece of evidence. It was taken away by police, and the media have not mentioned it since. What was in it? Have we been told? Or has it been quietly incinerated?
The Invisible Mr Bailey

Another person who is a key part of the case, Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey, seems also to have disappeared. He was released from hospital on 22nd March, and a statement put out in his name included the following request:

“I do understand and appreciate the attention on this incident, but I would ask people to put themselves in my shoes. I want to respectfully ask the media for privacy for me and my family at this time and for no intrusion into my private life, so that my family and I can try to come to terms with what has happened.”

That seems entirely reasonable. Had I been in the same situation, I wouldn’t have wanted the media intruding.

However, this was well over two months ago, and since then we have heard nothing from Mr Bailey. We’ve heard from Yulia Skripal, whose condition was clearly much worse than his, and who also requested that her privacy be respected in the statement released on her behalf. But we’ve heard nothing from Mr Bailey.

Part of the reason that this is so curious is that there is one vital piece of the case that has never been properly explained. Where was he actually poisoned?

All initial reports claimed that he was poisoned at the park bench in The Maltings. Then in a radio interview on 9th March, the former Metropolitan Police Commissioner, Lord Ian Blair, stated that he was actually poisoned at Mr Skripal’s house. That might have been the end of the matter, were it not for the fact that subsequent reports then swung backwards and forwards between the bench and the house as the place of poisoning.

Why couldn’t they get the story straight? I mean, it must be one of the easiest parts of the whole case to establish. I’m sure that GPS tracking could throw up an answer. Or alternatively, couldn’t we just hear from Mr Bailey himself? How difficult would that be? Yet the that we haven’t heard, and that the issue has not been settled, is surely very odd indeed.

Personally, I find it strange that he would have been called to the incident at The Maltings. He is a member of Wiltshire Police Criminal Investigation Department (CID), and for the first 24 hours there was no suspicion of a crime having taken place, it being thought that the pair on the bench had overdosed on Fentanyl. Then again, I find Lord Blair’s claim, that he was poisoned at the house, equally unconvincing. Again, why would a member of CID have gone to the house of someone who was suspected of having overdosed on a park bench on Fentanyl? A third scenario, that he was at both places, is of course even more unlikely.

So how does one process this? Given that Detective Sergeant Bailey has not been interviewed by the media to confirm where, when and how he was poisoned; given the fact that the authorities and the media appear unable or unwilling to confirm this most straightforward of facts; and given that neither The Maltings or Mr Skripal’s house seem to be wholly plausible, both for the reason given above, but also because this raises the question of why others were not poisoned at those locations, I would submit that the most reasonable view to take – until evidence confirms otherwise – is that Detective Sergeant Bailey was poisoned neither at the bench nor the house, but somewhere else altogether.

These are all important aspects of the case. Yet I am convinced that there is another even bigger aspect, which begins to join the dots together. I will discuss this in Part 3.
Part 3 – The Agitated Mr Skripal

So far, I have stated why I believe the official narrative on the Skripal case does not appear to hold water, before going on to mention four aspects of the case, which are undoubtedly significant, but which seem to have been ignored or forgotten. As I said at the end of Part 2, I now want to discuss what I consider to be an even bigger aspect of the case; something that may well begin to join some dots together.

However, before I do, I should start by saying that what I am about to say is speculative. That is not to say that it is not based on facts. It is. It is based on witness testimony that appeared very early on in the case — three days after the poisoning — and which I deem to be credible since it appeared before the case became completely politicised, which is sadly what subsequently happened. I am then using that testimony to construct what I consider to be the best explanation for what the witness described. And so it is very much a theory. One based on facts, but a theory nevertheless. As such it is of course open to challenge.

Let me begin by quoting a significant chunk of the particular witness testimony, which appeared in the Daily Mail on 7th March. I have highlighted what I consider to be the most revealing bits, and then at the end I will explain why I think they are important and what — in my opinion — they most likely imply:

“Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia, 33, left his neat, red brick £350,000 semi detached in Salisbury and made their way to Zizzi in the city centre, less than two miles away. The restaurant, in Castle Street, was busy when they arrived, but they declined the seats offered to them at the front, instead selecting ones at the back, close to the kitchen.

They began with a starter of garlic bread to share followed by two glasses of white wine. They ordered from the menu, choosing the 600 calorie risotto pesce with king prawns, mussels and squid rings in a tomato, chilli and white wine sauce.

**But within minutes Mr Skripal had become angry**, a witness said. ‘I think he was swearing in Russian,’ said the man, who did not want to be named. ‘She was just sitting there quietly, and didn’t really say anything. They were both smartly dressed, she was in a black coat. They were speaking to each other in Russian.’ **He said Mr Skripal appeared annoyed that their main course had taken 20 minutes to arrive — and appeared in a hurry to leave.**

‘He was going absolutely crazy, I didn’t understand it and I couldn’t understand him. They had not been seen for a little while by the front of house staff, but I think it was more than that. **He just wanted his food and to go.** He was just shouting and losing his temper. I would have asked him to leave. He just said “I want my food and my bill”. **The waiter took him the bill at the same time as the main course, which was unusual.** I don’t think they paid all of the bill. I think they were given a discount because he was so angry and agitated. He had to wait about 20 minutes for his main course. I think it was easier for the staff just to give him money to leave as he was so angry. They were sitting by themselves at the back of the restaurant but I think people were pleased when they left. They were only there for about 45 minutes. **It was a quick lunch. He just wanted to get out of there. She was silent, perhaps embarrassed.**’

He added: ‘He didn’t seem to have to wait long for his food. I noticed him first because they were sitting by themselves, and because he was an older man with a younger woman, and because he was losing his temper. **He didn’t seem ill physically, but perhaps mentally ill with the way he was shouting.**’
The witness said other than appearing angry, there was no sign that either of them were ill.

‘They weren’t poisoned at Zizzi. I saw the chef prepare the food,’ he said. ‘No one could have sneaked in and added anything to his food there, the kitchen is open. The drinks are made at the bar which is by the door, but I think it is unlikely. No one could get to him.’”

So why is this all so significant? There are a number of things:

**In good health**

In the first place, it shows that at the time they were in the restaurant, neither Mr Skripal or Yulia Skripal were displaying any signs of being physically unwell. On the contrary, the witness testifies to the fact that Mr Skripal did not seem at all physically ill, and he also stated that Yulia sat there calmly and quietly.

**No signs of any poisoning**

Secondly, it shows that at that time, neither of them appeared to be showing any symptoms whatsoever of having already been poisoned. On the contrary, the fact that they ordered and then ate their food is a very strong indication that they hadn’t. If Mr Skripal’s agitated state could be explained by a prior poisoning — by the deadliest nerve agent known to man remember — how likely would it be that he would have felt well enough to order and consume his dish of risotto pesce with king prawns, mussels and squid rings in a tomato, chilli and white wine sauce. Not the kind of food that someone feeling dodgy is likely to wolf down, as he appears to have done.

**The agitation must therefore be explained by something else**

Thirdly, the obvious conclusion suggested by the two points above is this: Mr Skripal’s agitation had nothing whatsoever to do with him feeling the effects of having already been poisoned. Rather, it was because of something else entirely.

Of course this leads to the question of what it was that caused his agitation. Here we must take the facts, and begin to make suppositions based on them.

The witness’s testimony of Mr Skripal’s behaviour makes it abundantly clear that he was very much in a hurry to leave. And as stated above, this agitation and hurry can have had nothing whatsoever to do with feeling physically unwell from the effects of poisoning, since he displayed no such signs and because he went ahead and ate his food – very quickly it would seem.

Now tell me: if you saw someone in a restaurant getting in a hissy fit over a relatively short wait for his food, angrily demanding that he be served, asking for the bill to be brought at the same time as the main course, wolfing the food down, and generally looking like he was in a hurry to leave, what would you conclude? My guess is that you would conclude that the person was in a hurry because they needed to get somewhere by a certain time. Seems obvious, doesn’t it?

And so it seems to me from Mr Skripal’s behaviour, plus the witness’s impression, that there is a startlingly simple and obvious explanation for what was going on at Zizzis that afternoon: Mr Skripal was in a hurry to eat and to leave, not because he was unwell, not because he was suffering any physical effects of being poisoned by A-234 some four hours previous, but because he needed to be somewhere to meet with someone at a certain time. And where did he have to get to in such a hurry? Why, the park bench in The Maltings, sometime between 3:45 and 4:00pm.
I hear an objection. When I ran this supposition past a friend, they replied by saying that although it all sounds very plausible, how do we know that Mr Skripal was not just generally mentally ill? After all, the witness says that although Mr Skripal didn’t seem physically ill, he was “perhaps mentally ill with the way he was shouting.”

To this, I would respond as follows: firstly, it is well known that he was a frequent visitor to Zizzis, and had this been his normal sort of behaviour, it is likely that he would have exhibited it before and been prevented from entering. But secondly, and far more crucially, is the behaviour of his daughter. According to the witness, she just sat there and said nothing. She made no attempt to calm him down in front of the staff and other diners. Had he been mentally ill, it is likely that she would have made some attempt to explain his behaviour apologetically to the staff. Yet she does not, which suggests that she was well aware of the reason for his agitation, and – like him – just wanted to get out of there as quickly as possible.

And so I submit that the most plausible explanation for Mr Skripal’s agitation, and his seeming hurry to leave, was that he wanted to eat quickly, in order to get to The Maltings, where he had a pre-arranged rendezvous at the now infamous bench.

In the following part, I hope to join some more dots together, this time asking why he might have had a meeting at the bench.
Part 4 – The Dodgy Dossier

Before coming on to propose a theory of what may have happened, it is important to have a theory of why it might have happened. I emphasise the word theory, because that is all it is — neither more nor less. And of course, it could be well wide of the mark. Make of it what you will!

In a recent blog, Craig Murray, the former UK Ambassador to Uzbekistan, linked to a very interesting piece by Paul Gregory that appeared in Forbes in January 2017. Mr Gregory is Professor of Economics at Houston University, and research fellow at both the Hoover Institution and the German Institute for Economic Research, and he also has extensive knowledge about Russia and the Soviet Union. Here’s what he had to say about the so-called Trump Dossier, just a few days after it was published by Buzzfeed:

“As someone who has worked for more than a decade with the microfilm collection of Soviet documents in the Hoover Institution Archives, I can say that the dossier itself was compiled by a Russian, whose command of English is far from perfect and who follows the KGB (now FSB) practice of writing intelligence reports, in particular the practice of capitalizing all names for easy reference. It was written, in my opinion, not by an ex-British intelligence officer but by a Russian trained in the KGB tradition [my emphasis].”

Now, we know that there is a link between the apparent author of the Trump Dossier, Christopher Steele and Mr Skripal’s MI6 recruiter and handler, Pablo Miller. And we know that Miller and Skripal met regularly. Not only this, but we also know that there is a direct link between Steele and Skripal dating back to the late 1990s, early 2000s. There is, then, a clear link between the man credited (if that be the right word) with writing the Dossier, and a certain ex-Russian intelligence officer, who would have been trained in the KGB tradition (he was actually in the GRU), living in Salisbury. In fact, the Daily Telegraph helpfully pointed out this connection a day before the Government slapped a D-notice on reporting on the issue.

But is there another clue? I think there is. By itself, it would mean nothing, but it is an interesting possibility in connection with what I have just stated.

According to the Czech magazine, Respekt, Mr Skripal had links with Czech Intelligence. This included a meeting in Prague back in 2012, but there were also subsequent meetings where Czech Intelligence officers came to meet with him in Britain. We are not told when or where this took place, suffice it to say that there was an ongoing connection.

If we then turn to the Trump Dossier itself, we find this in the sections dated August and October 2016:

“We reported previously (2016/135 and /136) on secret meeting/s held in Prague, Czech Republic in August 2016 between then Republican presidential candidate Donald TRUMP’s representative, Michael COHEN and his interlocutors from the Kremlin working under cover of Russian NGO Rossotrudnichestvo...

Speaking to a compatriot and friend on 19 October 2016, a Kremlin insider provided further details of reported clandestine meeting/s between Republican presidential candidate, Donald TRUMP’s lawyer Michael COHEN and Kremlin representatives in August 2016. Although the communication between them had to be cryptic for security reasons, the
Kremlin insider clearly indicated to his/her friend that the reported contact/s took place in Prague, Czech Republic.”

Mr Cohen has of course vehemently denied this claim, saying that he has never been to Prague. Whether he has or hasn’t is not for me to say, but it is in any case irrelevant to the point I am making. That point is this: Sergei Skripal had what looks like extensive connections with Czech Intelligence, and claims – whether true or false –, which presumably came from Czech sources, are found in the Trump Dossier.

Putting these three things together – the Steele/Miller/Skripal connection; the Czech claims in the Dossier; and the emphatic claim made by Paul Gregory that the Dossier itself was compiled by a Russian “trained in the KGB tradition” – then you can begin to see where this might be pointing.

Now, you’d think from the way the BBC and others have reported on Mr Skripal that he was just some old chap enjoying his retirement in the quiet city of Salisbury, where he was in the habit of frequenting local restaurants and pottering about in his garden. Yet his continued work for British Intelligence, which saw him travelling to the Czech Republic and Estonia in 2016 to meet with intelligence officers, paints a somewhat different picture. Also, remember this is a man who once sold out hundreds of his fellow countrymen in the late 1990s and early 2000s for filthy lucre. The fact that he continued to work for British Intelligence after being settled in Salisbury suggests not only that there was not what you might call deep repentance, but also presents the possibility that he continued to be lured by the promise of cash.

And so one wonders whether the man who was bought for a price by MI6 back in the 1990s might have still been buyable after he settled in Salisbury. Might Steele, who had been commissioned by Fusion GPS on behalf of the Democrats to put together some dirt on Donald Trump, have asked Skripal to cobble something together? Might Skripal have used his contacts in places like the Czech Republic and Estonia to give it some semblance of credibility? Might Skripal have been swayed by the promise of more money to put together a Dossier full of salacious and unverifiable gossip?

And be in no doubt, the Trump Dossier is a Dodgy Dossier. I write this as someone who thinks that Donald Trump is a walking disaster area, and as someone who has no desire to defend him. Yet the fallaciousness of the Dossier, which has formed the basis of the attempts to smear and possibly impeach him, is clear, as Paul Gregory articulated well in his piece for Forbes:

“The Orbis dossier is fake news ... [It] makes as if it knows all the ins-and-outs and comings-and-goings within Putin’s impenetrable Kremlin. It reports information from anonymous ‘trusted compatriots,’ ‘knowledgeable sources,’ ‘former intelligence officers,’ and ‘ministry of foreign affairs officials.’ The report gives a fly-on-the-wall account of just about every conceivable event associated with Donald Trump’s Russian connections ... There are two possible explanations for the fly-on-the-wall claims of the Orbis report: Either its author (who is not Mr. Steele) decided to write fiction, or collected enough gossip to fill a 30-page report, or a combination of the two .”

Indeed, the whole thing has all the look and feel of having been written by a firm that wanted a payday, but never in their wildest dreams expected the contents of it to become public knowledge. And they never expected it to be revealed because they never expected Mr Trump to win the 2016 election. In the infinitesimally small chance that he did win, I don’t suppose it even occurred to them that it might be taken seriously by US Intelligence.

And so here is the supposition as to the “why” of this case: The Democrat Party paid Fusion GPS to dig up some dirt on Donald Trump. Fusion GPS contracted this out to British Intelligence, who put them on to Orbis Business Intelligence, a private security firm owned by former MI6 officer Christopher Steele. Steele took the money and farmed the project out to Skripal who, because of his
knowledge of Russia and his contacts with intelligence agencies in other countries, could make it sound reasonably plausible, at least to those who were paying for it.

But then – and this like that bit in the Lord or The Rings when it says that the Ring came into the possession of the unlikeliest creature – the Dodgy Dossier somehow found its way into the hands of US Intelligence agencies, and instead of seeing it as the obvious fraud that it was, amazingly they took it seriously. So seriously, in fact, that it became what the then Deputy Assistant Director of the Counterintelligence Division, Peter Strzok, described in a text message to his mistress, Lisa Page, as “an insurance policy” – that is, insurance against the unthinkable happening and Donald Trump becoming President.

But of course the unthinkable did happen. Against all expectations, Mr Trump won, and suddenly that same “insurance policy”, full of salacious gossip and unverifiable information, took on a life of its own, with all of the Beltway talking about it, and then with Buzzfeed eventually releasing it into the public domain. And so what was meant to be a product with enough plausibility to satisfy those paying for it, became the foundation for the attempts to bring down a sitting President.

If the above is correct — and let me reiterate once again that it is simply a theory, not necessarily a fact — then Sergei Skripal, not Christopher Steele, was the main author of the Trump Dossier. If that was the case, isn’t it possible that he might have sought a payment to keep quiet about its origins and the nature of its contents? And isn’t it possible that there might have been others who would seek to keep him quiet by other means?

In the next part of this series, I’ll attempt to propose a theory as to what actually happened on the evening of 4th March in Salisbury.
Part 5 – An Educated Guess

I want in this piece to start joining some dots together on this case, using some of the facts, clues and suppositions that I have set out in the previous parts. I want to propose a theory — or maybe educated guess is a better term — for what I think may have happened on 4th March. Then in the final piece I will attempt to show why I think this theory helps to explain a number of other events and incidents connected with the story. Think of that final part as tying up some loose ends.

So what of the theory?

Back in Part 2, I made the claim that two of the most important clues in the whole Skripal case are:

1. The people who were seen on CCTV walking through the Market Walk towards The Maltings at 15:47 who were very clearly not Sergei and Yulia Skripal
2. The red bag that one of them was carrying

These clues are very important, because one of the first witnesses on the scene, Freya Church, testified that she saw a red bag at Yulia Skripal’s feet. In addition, we know that a red bag was placed in an evidence bag and taken away from the scene.

Of course, it could be that the red bag seen near the bench was not the same red bag carried by the person walking through The Maltings. Then again, large red bags like that are not exactly very common (walk around a town and see how many you spot). If the people and the bag have been ruled out, I haven’t heard anything to that effect in the media. Rather, they have been quietly forgotten about in the midst of a lot of nonsense about door handles and deadly nerve agents that don’t kill. This itself raises suspicions, and it is therefore entirely reasonable to suppose that these two people are important, and that the red bag seen on CCTV is the same one seen next to the bench.

Some 10-15 minutes before these two people walked through the Market Walk, Sergei and Yulia Skripal left Zizzis restaurant. They did so after Mr Skripal became extremely agitated, demanding the bill at the same time as the main course, which he ate (the food that is, not the bill). However, this was not down to his being physically unwell, or showing signs of suffering any effects of poisoning, as the fact that he ate the lunch shows quite clearly. As I argued in Part 3, the most likely reason for his agitation and obvious desire to leave as quickly as possible was that he had an appointment to keep – one that he was perhaps nervous about, but one that he could not afford to miss.

Let’s now construct a timeline of the events that followed:

15:35 – Sergei Skripal and Yulia leave Zizzis. They make their way to The Maltings, presumably along Market Walk (although strangely there is no CCTV footage of this), a walk of about two minutes or so.

15:37 – When they got to The Maltings, they appear not to have gone straight to the bench, but to the Avon Playground (approximately 50 yards from the bench), where they spent some time feeding ducks. They presumably then went over to the bench, a few minutes after this.

15:47 – The mysterious pair, one of whom is carrying a red bag, are seen on CCTV walking through Market Walk in the direction of The Maltings.

16:03 – One of the first witnesses to the scene, Freya Church, who was working in the nearby Snap Fitness, leaves work at 16:00 or thereabouts, and sees the Skripals on the
bench at approximately 16:03. According to her account, they were already “out of it”, which suggests that they had been poisoned some minutes previously. She noted that there was a red bag on the floor next to Yulia’s feet.

16:15 – Emergency services are called and the pair are taken to Salisbury District Hospital, Yulia by helicopter and Sergei by ambulance. Upon admittance, the hospital believed that the pair had overdosed on Fentanyl, and treated this as an opioid poisoning for at least 24 hours after the incident.

Later that evening – Police remove the red bag, and it has never been heard of or mentioned in connection with the story since.

Assuming that the red bag seen next to Yulia Skripal is the same as the one carried by the person nearest the camera in the Market Walk – who was not Yulia Skripal – we can begin to make some educated guesses as to what happened in those crucial minutes, from 15:47 to 16:03.

In Part 4, I made the case that there is a strong possibility that Sergei Skripal, not Christopher Steele, was the author of the Trump Dossier. Certainly, the connections between Steele and Skripal make that plausible, as does some of the material contained therein, as does the fact that Russia experts, such as Paul Gregory and Craig Murray, are convinced that the Dossier was written by a Russian “trained in the KGB tradition.”

My (hopefully educated) guess is therefore that Mr Skripal, who knew much about the origins, the contents and the falsehoods of the Dossier, was hoping to be paid off to keep quiet about it. Furthermore, my guess is that he was due to meet someone for this purpose at the park bench in The Maltings at about 3:45pm on 4th March (NB. even if the theory about the money is wide of the mark, I would still say that the rest of the clues tend to suggest that he was due to meet someone at the park bench).

Why meet on the park bench and why drag Yulia along with him? In both instances, as an insurance policy. Meeting out in public, albeit at a time on a Sunday afternoon when few people would be about, would perhaps be “safer” than meeting at home. Taking Yulia along with him would also add another layer of “safety”. Even so, if my supposition is anywhere close to the truth, Mr Skripal would have been apprehensive about the rendezvous, hence his agitation in the restaurant.

According to this scenario, the people seen walking along Market Walk at 15:47 approached the bench. This would have been about 15:48. Perhaps a few words were exchanged, or perhaps the bag was simply put down on the floor, and the pair who had delivered it walked away.

My guess is that over the next few minutes, both Sergei Skripal and Yulia looked into the bag where, amongst other things, there was some kind of toxic substance (which may explain the reason for the white gloves). What was the substance? First let’s say what it was not. It was not a lethal nerve agent, 5-8 times more deadly than VX. If it had been a lethal nerve agent, 5-8 times more deadly than VX, then they would either have died over the next few minutes, or they would have been hospitalised and suffered irreparable damage to their nervous system. Since neither of these things happened, it is safe to say that whatever the substance was, it was not A-234. Indeed, it defies logic, reason and all common sense to maintain that it was.

What was it? It is impossible to say for sure, but given the fact that they were fairly quickly incapacitated, yet suffered no long lasting and irreparable damage, what we are probably looking at is some kind of non-lethal incapacitating nerve agent. For the point was not to kill Mr Skripal – that would have inevitably led to a whole can of worms being opened about who he was and what he was doing – but to incapacitate him and hospitalise him for a time, with a substance that looked like it could be some kind of opioid poisoning, in order to send him a message.
Can we say more? I think so. The hospital treated the case as that of a Fentanyl poisoning for at least 24 hours. The reason for this can only have been because the symptoms exhibited were roughly consistent with the effects of poisoning by Fentanyl. What were those symptoms? Let’s turn to the testimony of various witnesses to the scene, all of which largely agree with one another (I have highlighted those bits that I see as most crucial in pointing to possible substances):

“He was doing some strange hand movements, looking up to the sky. I felt anxious, I felt like I should step in, but to be honest they looked so out of it that I thought even if I did step in, I wasn’t sure how I could help. So I just left them. But it looked like they’d been taking something quite strong” – Freya Church.

“It was like her body was dead. Her legs were really stiff... you know when animals die, they have rigor mortis. Both her legs came together when people pulled (her), and when she was on the floor her eyes were just completely white. They were wide open but just white and frothing at the mouth. Then the man went stiff: his arms stopped moving, but he’s still looking dead straight” – Jamie Paine.

“He was quite smartly dressed. He had his palms up to the sky as if he was shrugging and was staring at the building in front of him. He had a woman sat next to him on the bench who was slumped on his shoulder. He was staring dead straight. He was conscious but it was like he was frozen and slightly rocking back and forward” – Georgia Pridham.

“The paramedics seemed to be struggling to keep the two people conscious. The man was sitting staring into space in a catatonic state” – Graham Mulcock.

“I saw quite a lot of commotion – there were two people sat on the bench and there was a security guard there. They put her on the ground in the recovery position, and she was shaking like she was having a seizure. It was a bit manic. There were a lot of people crowded round them. It was raining, people had umbrellas and were putting them over them” – Destiny Reynolds.

Okay, so what do we have?

- Firstly, we can say that it is a substance that possibly causes hallucinations (“out of it” “staring at the building” “palms up to the sky”)
- Secondly, it also causes contraction of the pupils (“her eyes were completely white”)
- Thirdly, it seems to cause something like stupor (“he was staring dead straight”, “like he was frozen” “catatonic state”)
- Fourthly, it can cause tremors (“rocking back and forth” – see here for details on tremors, the effects of which include an unintentional, rhythmic muscle movement involving to-and-fro movements
- Fifthly, it can cause shaking and seizures (she was shaking like she was having a seizure)
- Sixthly, it can cause frothing at the mouth (which can be caused by seizures or pulmonary edema — fluid accumulation in the tissue and air spaces of the lungs)

There are a number of substances that fit these descriptions reasonably well. For instance, there is Carfentanil, which is an analogue of Fentanyl, only much stronger. Here is a description of some of its symptoms:

“Carfentanil has rapid onset [following IM administration] in animal patients, and is metabolized by the liver and excreted in the bile or by the kidneys … Signs and symptoms of
exposure are consistent with opioid toxicity and include pinpoint pupils, respiratory depression, and depressed mental status. Other signs and symptoms include dizziness, lethargy, sedation, nausea, vomiting, shallow or absent breathing, cold clammy skin, weak pulse, loss of consciousness, and cardiovascular collapse secondary to hypoxia and death” – Lust et al. (2011).

Another possibility is 3-Quinuclidinyl-Benzilate (or BZ):

“Depending on the dose and time postexposure, a number of CNS [Central Nervous System] effects may manifest. Restlessness, apprehension, abnormal speech, confusion, agitation, tremor, picking movements, ataxia, stupor, and coma are described. Hallucinations are prominent, and they may be benign, entertaining, or terrifying to the patient experiencing them. Exposed patients may have conversations with hallucinated figures, and/or they may misidentify persons they typically know well. Simple tasks typically performed well by the exposed person may become difficult. Motor coordination, perception, cognition, and new memory formation are altered as CNS muscarinic receptors are inhibited” – Holstege CP and Baylor M; CBRNE – Incapacitating Agents, 3-Quinuclidinyl Benzilate. (May 24, 2006)

Let me clarify that I am not saying that it was either of these substances that was used to poison the Skripals. However, it is abundantly clear that the behaviour they exhibited, as described by various witnesses, far more closely matches the descriptions of the effects of substances like Carfentanil and BZ than it does A-234.

And so the sum and substance of this theory is as follows:

- That Sergei Skripal had arranged to meet someone at around 3:45pm at the park bench in The Maltings.
- That this was something to do with his involvement in and possible authorship of the so-called Trump Dossier.
- That the people he met were the same people who were spotted on a CCTV camera in Market Walk at 3:47.
- That the red bag that one of them was carrying is the same red bag that was seen by witnesses at the bench.
- That it was in this bag that some sort of incapacitating substance had been placed.
- That both Sergei and Yulia Skripal became incapacitated after looking inside the bag.
- That the bag was later taken away, and probably subsequently destroyed.

Of course, if this theory has any credibility, it does raise one huge question. How did we go from Mr Skripal being targeted with an incapacitating substance, to wild and wholly absurd claims of him being targeted with the most deadly nerve agent known to man? The answer to that, I believe, is that it all went a bit wrong, there was a panic, and in that panic a cover up of frankly bizarre proportions. In the final piece, I will be explaining how I think it went wrong, and then tying up some loose ends to show how I think the theory I have advanced is backed up by some of the subsequent occurrences connected to this very strange case.
Part 6 – Tying up the Loose Ends

Over these five parts, I have, slowly but surely, advanced a theory of what happened in the Skripal case. I must confess to having done so with a fair amount of unease. I don’t want to believe that my Government has been stating a case that is false. I don’t want to believe that the public have been lied to. I don’t want to have to think that there has been a lot of effort made to present an explanation that hides the truth.

And yet, given the fact that the Government story contains self-evident fallacies, and cannot be made to add up, I don’t think that there’s much alternative than to be hugely sceptical about their claims. I stated the two main fallacies in Part 1, which are the claims that three people were poisoned by the nerve agent A-234, which is 5-8 times more toxic than VX, and that because A-234 was developed in the Soviet Union, the Russian State is responsible for what happened. The first claim cannot be true, because the three people are alive and well and have suffered no irreparable damage. The second claim is palpably untrue, because A-234 has been synthesised in a number of countries.

Yet this is only the tip of the iceberg of the absurdities and anomalies. I don’t intend to go through all of them, but would simply point anyone who does believe the official story to concentrate on three words: The Door Handle. This was apparently where the poison was poured, so allow me to pose five questions about this claim to those who believe it to be true:

1. During the “clean-up” operation, there were lots of military chaps wearing HazMat suits, which are designed to protect against exposure to toxic chemicals. How, then, did the assassin apparently manage to pour this same lethal, military grade nerve agent on a door handle, without wearing a HazMat suit?

2. On the other hand, if he or she was wearing a HazMat suit when performing the operation, wouldn’t someone in Christie Miller Road have noticed and found it – shall we say – a bit odd?

3. If the poison was administered to the door handle, how exactly did both Sergei and Yulia Skripal manage to touch it (people don’t normally both touch the door handle if they go in the house together), and how did they manage to get exactly the right quantities on their skin so that they collapsed at exactly the same time, some four hours later?

4. The door handle theory only reared its head some three weeks after the poisoning, at which point the substance was said to have been still present in a “highly pure” form. During this three weeks, many people went in and out of Mr Skripal’s house using the front door. How did they manage to do so without using the door handle, or if they did, how did they manage not to succumb to poisoning?

5. Part of the Government’s alleged evidence pointing at the high likelihood of Russian involvement in the case, is an FSB instruction manual showing – amongst other things – how to assassinate someone by pouring Novichok on a door handle. Suspending our disbelief on this claim for a moment (and admittedly that is hard), did the Government have the manual when they made their accusations against the Russian Government on 12th and 14th March, and if so, why did the door handle theory not surface for more than a week after this?
Of course, a few moments consideration about the door handle theory will show that – like the rest of the official story – it is simply wrong. And because it is so plainly wrong, that is why we can safely say that the real explanation lies elsewhere.

Nevertheless, I am aware that in advancing another explanation, there are likely to be many holes in it too. Whilst much of what I have said throughout this series has been based on facts and eyewitness statements, the theory I have advanced from those facts and witness statements remains unproven. And so I would ask that where I have got things wrong, you would forgive me, and where things don’t make sense, you would point them out.

Having said that, what I want to do in this final piece it to tie up a few loose ends and – most particularly – attempt to demonstrate how the theory I have advanced explains some of the other anomalies in the case in a far more cogent and rational way than does the official story. So here goes.

The Deafening Silence of Sergei Skripal

One of the least talked about points in the official story, yet one that really is very important, is that if it were a true account, Mr Skripal would almost certainly have no more clue about who poisoned him than the average person in the street. If it were true that an unknown assassin, appointed by the Russian Government, poured military-grade nerve agent onto his front door on 4th March, before fleeing back to the Motherland, Mr Skripal and his daughter, Yulia, would be as much in the dark as to who did it than you or I.

Now, if that were the case, two things would naturally follow. The first is that Mr Skripal would almost certainly be inclined to believe the version of events given to him by the Metropolitan Police. Think about it. He wakes up one morning in a strange hospital bed, and has absolutely no clue why he is there or what happened to him. Then a kindly policeman comes and explains that he was the target of an assassination attempt using a lethal nerve agent, and that the British Government believes that it was ordered by the Russian Government. What is he going to believe? Fairly obvious I would think. At least he would have no reason to disbelieve them.

The second thing that would naturally follow is that, as soon as he was able, he would want to release a statement, either on paper, or in an interview, where he not only pledges his support for the Metropolitan Police and their ongoing investigation, and no doubt hints at involvement of the Russian State, but also – and this is crucial – where he also gives the public some information about what actually happened to him on 4th March: where he went, when he first started to feel ill, and what he last remembers.

Again, think about it. If you were in his shoes, wouldn’t you want to catch the people who did it? And wouldn’t you assume that the more information you could give to the public, perhaps even clearing up some of the anomalies (such as the reason for the agitation in Zizis), the more chance there would be that someone’s memory might be jogged and vital information given to the police?

Of course you would. And yet so far, Mr Skripal has released no such statement. Why?

It isn’t that he is physically or mentally incapacitated. We know from Yulia Skripal’s brief call to her cousin on April 5th (which almost certainly wasn’t “meant” to happen), that Sergei was by that time fine. In response to Viktoria’s question about her father, she said this:

“Everything is ok. He is resting now, having a nap. Everyone’s health is fine, there are no irreparable things. I will be discharged soon. Everything is ok.”
That was nearly three months ago, and yet the Sergei Skripal who was fine on 5th April, having suffered no irreparable damage from apparently being poisoned by the world’s most deadly nerve agent, and who was discharged on 18th May, still has not spoken.

I put it that the theory I have advanced (see Part 5 in particular), suggests an obvious reason for his silence. Were he in the dark about the identity of those who poisoned him, as the official story implies, his silence would be inexplicable. Don’t you want to catch the perpetrators of this crime upon you and your daughter, Sergei?

Yet, if we assume that actually he knows exactly who poisoned him and why they poisoned him – as would be the case according to the theory I have advanced – then his silence is very easily explained. He cannot be allowed to be interviewed about what happened, because he would blow the whole wretched business clean out of the water. He cannot be allowed to make an open statement, with the press there to ask free questions, because it would come out that he had been meeting someone at the bench in The Maltings, and that this someone whom he met was the person who poisoned him.

In addition, his (highly likely) authorship of the Trump Dossier would be revealed. And if this were to happen, not only would it be seen that the foundation upon which the whole Trump/Russia collusion hoax was based was made of straw, but it would become clear that the interference in the 2016 US Presidential election was never really about Russian interference to get Trump elected; but rather about British interference to stop Trump getting elected.

The deafening silence of Mr Skripal is therefore strong evidence of a number of things:

- That the Government story, in which he was the unsuspecting victim of a Kremlin plot, is without foundation.
- That he well knows who his poisoners were and why they poisoned him.
- That he cannot be allowed to speak freely because if he was, a scandal of monumental proportions would be revealed.

The Deafening Silence of Yulia Skripal

Deafening silence of Yulia? What am I talking about? She has released a number of statements through the Metropolitan Police, and in the statement (not interview) she made to Reuters. So what do I mean?

Many have pointed out a number of remarkable things about her Reuters statement. For one, she looked remarkably well. For another, the language of the statement she read was highly suggestive that it was first written in English – not by her – and then translated into Russian (statements like “I do not wish to avail myself of their services” don’t normally trip off the tongue of native English speakers, let alone those who speak it as a second language).

But for me the most remarkable thing about all of her statements are not what they do say, but rather what they don’t say. As with Sergei’s silence, Yulia has nothing whatsoever to say about the day of the poisoning. Isn’t that odd? She notes that she and her father survived an “attempted assassination”. She notes that a nerve agent was used to do it. But she says nothing about her and her father’s movements that day. Nothing about what they did and where they went. Nothing about when they first succumbed to the effects of the poisoning. Nothing to suggest that her father’s agitation in Zizzis may have been caused by poisoning.

As with Sergei’s non-statements, this doesn’t compute. If you happened to wake up in a hospital to be told that you had been the victim of a nerve agent poisoning, you would almost certainly want to tell people as much as possible about your movements up to the point of the poisoning. Wouldn’t you? Of course. Especially if not only you had been poisoned, but also your dad. You’d at least want to sound a bit more interested in actually catching the perpetrators than Yulia, who didn’t so much as mention it, and instead sounded like she just wanted to move on and forget it ever happened.

Once again, this total silence on something so crucial just doesn’t fit at all with the official story. That narrative suggests that Sergei and Yulia were innocent victims of a Kremlin-hired assassin. That narrative suggests they don’t know who that Kremlin-hired assassin was. But it also suggests that they of all people have a huge interest in giving details of what happened to them that day. And yet there is silence.

Does it fit better with the theory I have proposed? You bet it does. If what I have suggested is anywhere close to the truth, just like Sergei, Yulia cannot be allowed the freedom to give a proper interview where any question is allowed. She cannot be given consular access by the Russian Embassy. Why not? Because she knows what her dad was up to; she knows why he was meeting people at a park bench on Sunday 4th March; and she knows that the two of them were poisoned by the people who they were meeting.

Why did she agree to an interview? No doubt she realises what a difficult and vulnerable position she is in. Despite claims to the contrary, she clearly has no contact with her family back in Russia, or indeed any contact with the outside world. She was almost certainly pressured into making a statement, and yet — as Tony Kevin convincingly argues here — it has many signs of being a compromise statement. And so she agreed to making a fairly nebulous statement — one which is almost inconceivable from the point of view of the official narrative, but which fits perfectly with the narrative I have advanced.

The Deafening Silence of Nick Bailey

One final deafening silence that doesn’t exactly do wonders for the official narrative, is the silence of Detective Sergeant Nick Bailey. He has always been a big puzzle in this case, for a number of reasons. It was first said that he was poisoned at The Maltings. However, the problem with this explanation is that there was absolutely no reason for him to have been there. The case was treated by Salisbury District Hospital as a case of Fentanyl poisoning. Why would a member of the Criminal Intelligence Department (CID) be called to a bench to an apparent opioid overdose?

It was then said by none other than Lord Ian Blair that DS Bailey was actually poisoned at Mr Skripal’s house. But again, the same question arises. Why would a member of CID be sent to the home of a person in a what looked like a case of opioid poisoning?

The story then swung backwards and forwards a number of times between a poisoning at the Maltings and a poisoning at Mr Skripal’s house. These anomalies are very important, but even more important is that they could have been put straight by DS Bailey himself. If the official story was correct, not only would it have been super easy to have verified where DS Bailey was poisoned, but he himself could have testified to it. And yet like the Skripals, there has been nothing!

Given the absurd changes to this particular part of the story – and it is perhaps the easiest of all parts to verify – my assumption is that he was poisoned at neither The Maltings or Mr Skripal’s house. Instead, just as I wrote in Part 5 that I believe it likely the Skripals were poisoned by an
incapacitating nerve agent in the red bag that was then seen next to the bench, I think it highly likely that DS Bailey was poisoned from the same source.

But where? The red bag was removed from the scene by a police officer and placed in an evidence bag. Why would this have been done? Because the pair on the bench were suspected of overdosing on an opioid, and the bag would naturally be removed by police so that its contents could be examined. And whereas I think it unlikely that someone from CID would be called to the scene of a drug overdose, it seems quite likely that they might receive and handle evidence taken from such a scene. Therefore my guess – and I stress that it is only a guess – is that DS Bailey was the man who received the bag, and whilst looking inside to see its contents, was poisoned by the same incapacitating agent as the Skripals (possibly something like 3-Quinuclidinyl Benzilate (BZ), but definitely not A-234).

Again, if the official story were true, what would prevent DS Bailey from giving a brief statement or interview, confirming exactly what happened to him? But if the red bag theory is close to the mark, then it becomes plainly obvious why this hasn’t yet happened.

Smokes and Mirrors

Which actually brings me on to the penultimate point I want to make in this piece, and indeed in this 6-part series. Everything in the official story, no matter how absurd, seems designed to point our attention away from the most probable source, place and type of poisoning: The red bag, at the bench, and an incapacitating nerve agent. And it does so because if our attention is focused on them, then a very different story begins to emerge. Which cannot be allowed to happen.

As stated above, claims about A-234 being used just don’t add up. Neither the time delay, nor the symptoms, nor the recovery of the Skripals with no irreparable damage match up to what this deadly, military grade, high purity, lethal nerve agent that is so much more toxic than VX, is meant to do. What the claim does, however, is points our attention away from what is far more likely – an incapacitating agent administered to the Skripals between 3:45 and 4:00pm on 4th March.

As stated above, claims about the door handle just don’t add up. Neither the fact that both Sergei and Yulia were poisoned, nor the fact that others went in and out of the house before the door handle theory was put forward and didn’t succumb, nor the fact that the substance on it apparently remained of “high purity” weeks later – none of these things make any sense. What the claim does, however, is directs our thoughts away from what is far more likely – that the substance used to poison the Skripals was administered at the bench, and probably via the red bag.

The apparent motive put forward in the official narrative doesn’t add up either. There is a general agreement among countries that you do not target spies who have been part of a swap. Why? Because if you do, you can kiss goodbye to ever getting any other spies swapped in the future. It’s called shooting yourself in the foot big time! But what this frankly risible explanation for the apparent motive behind the poisoning does, however, is to point our attention away from what Mr Skripal was really up to. And as I set out in Part 4, this was very likely something to do with authoring the Trump Dossier.

Nothing about the official story makes sense. None of it adds up. It is riddled with holes. But I would submit that the only thing that does make sense about it, is that the parts that go to make up the sum are all desperate attempts to divert attention. They are smokes and mirrors, designed to stop us from considering some of the more obvious aspects of the case, and some of the more startling aspects of the case – Mr Skripal’s involvement with MI6; his likely involvement in or authorship of the Trump Dossier; the likelihood that he was due to meet people at the bench in The Maltings; the probability that this is why he was agitated and in a hurry in Zizzis; the likelihood that he knows who poisoned him and why.
And of course the reason that these things are not supposed to be considered is that if – and I acknowledge it is a big if – the alternative explanation I have advanced is true, and if it became generally known, then it would cause just about the biggest political crisis in British political history.

And Finally...

Having said that, I have to say that I don’t believe it at all likely that the British Government knew about any of this before it occurred. I get the impression that the intelligence agencies on both sides of the Atlantic are a law unto themselves, and I think it likely that some of their number wanted to send Mr Skripal a message, one which would look like an opioid overdose, one which he would recover from reasonably quickly, and one which would be forgotten very soon.

However, I don’t think that the poisoning of DS Bailey was meant to happen, but when it did, it set off a series of events that quickly got out of control. I don’t think the identity of Sergei Skripal as a Russian involved in a spy swap was ever meant to make it into the press, but it did and very soon what looked like some kind of opioid poisoning quickly became an international spy saga.

The British Government’s reckless and extraordinarily quick reaction to the case was, apart from being a travesty of the rule of law, one of the biggest clues that the official narrative was not true. If it were true, they could have took their time, acted calmly, and let the investigation run its course. Instead, what we got was a lawless, irrational and absurd response. It all smacked of a panicked reaction, and whilst it made no sense in terms of the story they sold us, it makes perfect sense if the truth was that they were desperate to prevent news getting out about who Skripal really was, what he had been up to, and how the poisoning might well be connected with that work. And indeed the D-notices they slapped on the reporting of that stuff, and of Mr Skripal’s connections to Christopher Steele and Pablo Miller, are further evidence that it is so.

And so they very quickly decided to turn attention away from the big clues of the case, by invoking the scary sounding “Novichok” and pinning the blame – without any evidence – on the Russian State. To this date, they have given us no evidence to back up their claim, much less a suspect, but have unwittingly given us a bunch of absurdities that can be blown out of the water through the use of simple reason and logic.

They should have remembered this:

“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap”
(Galatians 6:7)

But I have a feeling they don’t believe it applies to them. I have a feeling that it does.

And so there’s my case. As I say, there are bound to be a good many holes and no doubt many errors and inconsistencies in it. Please do forgive me for those. As for the rest of it — Make of it what you will.