

Three weeks of inertia that led to the worst of all worlds

China has earned our distrust — but we still need to engage

Hoop and glory


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The Conservative MSP Tom Mason was greeted by mocking laughter in the Scottish parliament last week for asking when croquet might be played again.

Croquet is unfairly dismissed as a rather dainty pastime, as Labour's John Prescott discovered when he was teased mercilessly for playing it when he was deputy prime minister.

Yet this could be croquet's moment. Sales of sets have risen by as much as 600% as people look for a sport that will not be ruined by social distancing. Be warned, though: croquet isn't as genteel as it might seem.

"It gives release to all the evil in you," said the American newspaperman Herbert Swope. "It's a good game."

The American city of Boston actually banned croquet in 1898 because of its association with drinking and promiscuity. Which rather suggests that the game might not be so good for social distancing after all.