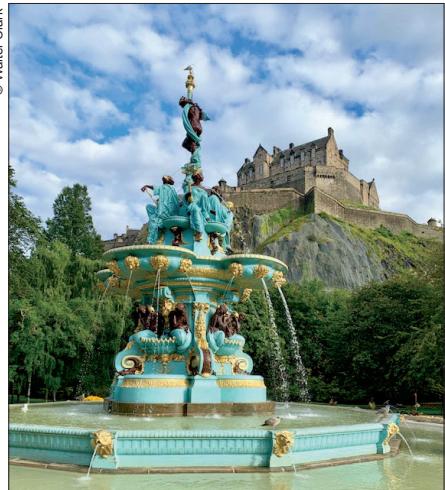


TURF - Outdoor Addiction Sweeps Edinburgh!

By Crawford Lindsay (turfnick "CSL") and Walter Clark (turfnick "ESOCWalter") of Edinburgh Southern Orienteering Club

If you like orienteering, the chances are that you will like Turf!

You can think about Turf like a huge score event, running 24/7 and re-starting at 1200 Midday CET on the first Sunday each month, which anyone can take part in at any time. Turf is an App primarily for your phone, which gives you controls (or "zones") to visit in your local area, as well as throughout the UK, and also across the world! Turf is massive in Sweden, where it's treated as a form of recreational orienteering, although there are occasional 'events'. So what's not to like?

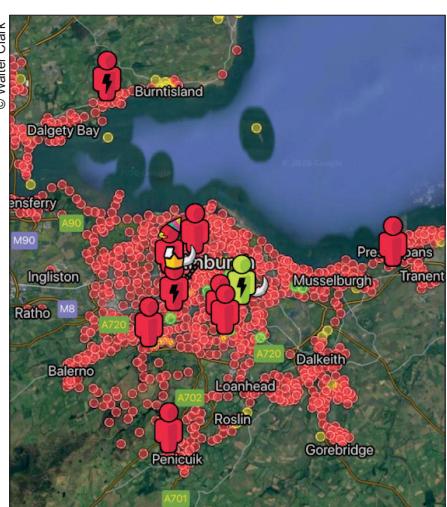


Go Turfing - see the World!

With the lack of the usual orienteering opportunities recently, many have found a variety of other map-related activities to entertain them. In ESOC, we've seen a huge surge of interest in Turf, which is not only keeping us active and keeping us connected through chat on our social media channels, but also taking us to loads of cool places we would never otherwise have visited. It's one in the eye for the pandemic as it is completely Covid-friendly!



Turf gets you out exploring the world around you.



Turf is effectively "played" using your smartphone and is a way of technology getting you into the outdoors and giving you a focus of where to go. Turf is a bit like MapRunF, in that it all works via GPS data. With Turf, you choose the controls to visit and how many, so it's infinitely variable and flexible, fitting into whatever you are doing, or giving you a reason to do something different. It's quite difficult to describe, but very easy to do, fun, and addictive! And it's free!

You claim the turf zones by going to them, and you earn points for taking the zone,



Edinburgh Turfing at its finest.

as well as plus points for every hour that you hold it. You can easily see where the nearest turf zones are to you when you start up the app. The aim is to get as many points as possible each month (or "round") by taking zones, and then re-taking them when someone else steals them from you! Although it never feels good to "lose" a zone, this is definitely very much part of the fun and provokes friendly rivalry, with some of us getting quite territorial over what we see as "our" zones!



Monuments make good Turf Zones.



Island Surfing.

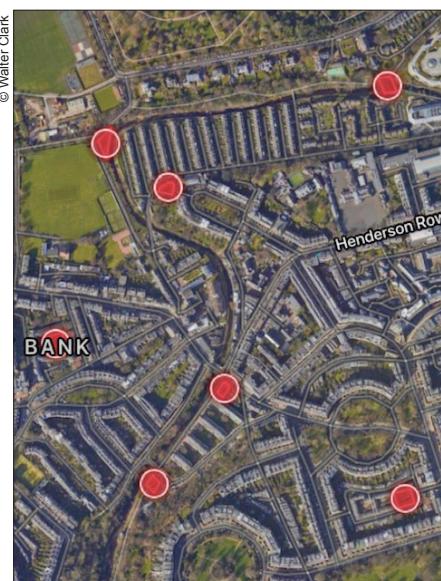
At the end of each round, winners are announced, your monthly total is reset, and the fun starts again. Your overall total carries on increasing though, and like many online games, this determines your rank. The higher your rank, the quicker it is to take a zone.

Another exciting element of it is that you can also collect virtual medals, e.g. for visiting 10 zones in as short a time as possible; visiting more than 50 zones in a day; visiting a zone every hour for 12 hours; and visiting multiple regions. Some of these medals have proved irresistible, and ESOC members have already gained medals such as "Dawn Ninja" for taking zones between 4am and 5am.

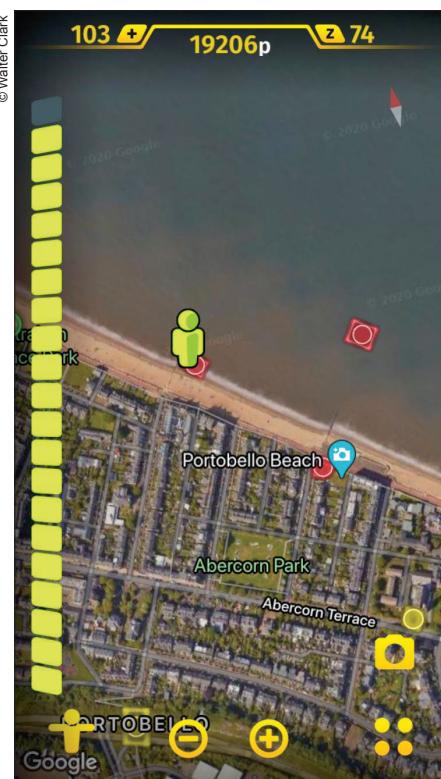
Another of the most highly sought-after medals is the "Order of the Aquamen" medal, which is a zone that you need to swim to! We have a zone just off Portobello Beach in Edinburgh that a few of our members have taken, carefully

judging the tides, and there's another in Loch Morlich near Aviemore which one of the families in ESOC claimed in a canoe!

A few UK orienteers have been dedicated turfers for the past few years, but the recent level of activity in Edinburgh is unprecedented, and the UK leader boards have never been so full. In ESOC we have run a small competition on the first day of the last three Turf rounds, with frantic activity as everyone tried to get the highest score by midnight. Already, Turf has quickly become a fixture of our club activities, and we also had a collective effort to take all the zones in Edinburgh within the month, which has been quite a challenge, as new ones keep appearing. One or two of our members have become



Taken zones - red - in Edinburgh. Note the map you get is effectively an aerial photo.



Zone taking - the bar on the left goes green from bottom to top one bar at a time.



Some zones are out in water or on islands meaning a swim or paddle to get to them. In Scandinavia when Lakes are frozen you can walk to some of them however.

quite obsessed (it isn't called Outdoor Addiction for nothing) and can be seen surfing at all hours of the day and night to get ahead of their rivals! One of our members (turfnick "féarglas") is surfing almost non-stop and was fifth in the overall world competition for August!

You can use Turf for training by deciding on a particular route and then running round, maybe comparing your time from run to run, or you can mix things up for variety. Some use Turf for interval training – you have to stop to take the zones. Working out which zones to go to, and in what order, is a fun puzzle, especially if you need to second-guess other turfers nearby. A zone gets blocked for a short period of time (from 10 to 20 minutes depending on rank of tuffer) once it is taken. It's also great for practising map memory, or for refining your decision-making for score events. You can go by bike too, or you can just go for a gentle walk and take some zones on the way. You can do it any way you like, whenever you like, as much or as little as you like, and this flexibility is one of the best things about it.

We've been very lucky in Edinburgh to

Scotland	
1.	féarglas + 233 105586 p
2.	CSL + 76 70466 p
3.	TimmyM + 118 47015 p
4.	ESOCWoody + 92 46423 p
5.	ESOCWalter + 102 32058 p
6.	QuirkESOCs + 100 29602 p
7.	ZulaTheAlien:) + 32 26707 p
8.	ESOCJeneral + 27 20997 p
9.	furf + 42 20153 p
10.	elph + 21 20153 p
11.	ESOCJanet + 25 19802 p
12.	Hodge + 55 19488 p

Scottish Turf League Table early on in September's Round.

have the support of Kingslayer (not his real name but a Swede based in Skåne!), who is our "zone-setter" for Scotland. Kingslayer and his Turf crew quickly noticed the increased activity around us here, and have been very helpful in defining hundreds of new zones in central Scotland, especially Edinburgh, Glasgow and surrounding areas. Collecting them has taken us to some corners we wouldn't otherwise have visited and has led to all kinds of curious discoveries and cool photos that we share in our "ESOC Turfers" WhatsApp group. It's an amazing way of exploring, even in places you thought you knew quite well, and giving you a focus for getting out and about.

There's a good description of Turf here:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turf_\(video_game\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Turf_(video_game))

And the Turf website, with lots of further information, is here: <https://turfgame.com/>

If you have any questions, please feel free to email us on president@esoc.org.uk and we will help you if we can. We're spreading the word on Turf simply because we've found it great fun in ESOC and have been getting a lot out of it. It would also be great to have some more competition in other parts of the UK – we know you will love it and so hope to see you out there in Turfland soon! But as we've warned you, it is addictive! You can try not to get swept into the usual trap of taking "just one more" zone before you head home ...

So enjoy Turf responsibly please! Download it now and get started!

Confessions of a Turf Newbie



Having your mobile attached to your handlebars is essential - but Turfing in the rain can be an issue.

by The Editor

It all started on Wednesday 9th September at 11:50 and 16 seconds. That is when I signed up to Turf, having downloaded the free App. If you do get keen you can pay to be a supporter and you get a few more bells and whistles, but essentially the App is free. You do however have to be online when you are out. The 'game' works in real time and you can't 'block' a zone after taking it for example if only you know about it. Being online is crucial. And you won't be able to zoom in and zoom out and search around for new zones if you are not online. So if you are going to play for many hours a week, beware you will burn through some gigabytes of data.

Unlike MapRun/UsynligO where GPS confirmation is immediate of your position and you move on, Turf makes you stay in the zone for what feels like forever. In fact it is 30 seconds when you start. Play

more and go up through the 60 ranks and this comes down to 18 seconds. Leave your GPS on between zones and it is 5 seconds quicker.

What this means in practice is that Turf is very annoying for running. You might think to go for a 6-mile run and bag 25 zones on the way, but 10 minutes of that you will be standing still, or jogging on the spot/doing burpees! That might be 20% of the time you are out. Hence using it for intervals makes more sense, although you need to run with your phone of course, somehow.

I quickly realised that Turf is best carried out on a bike. You cover the ground quicker, you can attach your phone to your handlebars and very few zones require you to get off your bike. Of course you can walk but it can be frustrating I found as you never seem to be able to get the next zone fast enough! And over time your local zones become very familiar to you with regular visiting. Any form of transport is fair game and have managed a couple of zones from sitting inside a car. Electric bikes or scooters must be great at saving your energy so you can Turf all day long and beyond.

Cheating is frowned upon, not that there is too much you can do to cheat. The obvious one is sharing an account or just giving your phone to another to take zones for you. There are systems in place so you can report people.

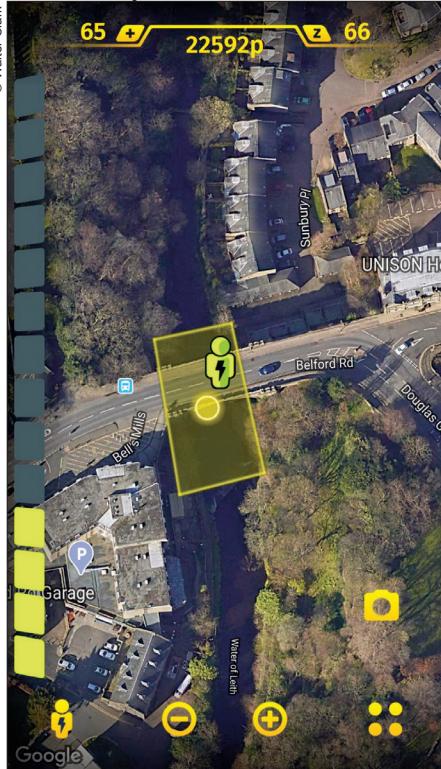
I have found it a great way to get out and get volume training done. You can get some fartlek going between zones on a bike, but not sure I would call it quality interval training. Often there are other members of the public to avoid, roads to cross, etc., especially in urban areas, but nevertheless, you can get very out of breath at times and the zone taking is a welcome respite! Going to new places and optimising your route between controls already visited is definitely the draw for me. Encouraging exercise without people realising it by just getting people out bagging zones is also one of Turf's strong points. However, in the UK there are currently large areas of the nation which are bereft of any zone nearby them. You might have to work to get some new zones in your area, or just keep the App for 'touristing'. You'd be surprised at some of the Turf locations around the world!

You can Turf with friends. You just need to be in the zone at the same time. All get the points for taking the zone but only one will end up owning it – the first person to get their left bar to go green. Such zone taking is called 'an assist.' What can be fun – and I have done this a few times – is to have a look at where Turfers are going and then deliberately try and beat them to their next zone. I've met a couple of Turfers this way. Aside from a funny turfnick, the activity is quite anonymous.

This first Turfer I met was an old timer Turfer, middle-aged woman on a bike, the second a retired wirey pensioner who was going for longer and more varied walks every day to take zones, and the third a guy in his twenties on a fast racing bike going on a massive zone bag on a Sunday. So a mixed bunch!

Getting around in unknown areas with Turf can be interesting as you just have effectively a Google Earth/Aerial photo. Much can be hidden under trees (like handy paths or massive cliffs you can't get up!) so local knowledge or some scouting out to find the best routes is useful. Some resort to using other online maps which can show paths and access more clearly.

It is certainly addictive and the knock on



Taking a bridge zone.

effects of such a time consuming activity can affect other areas of your life, so like any good chocolate cake, it is good to know when to stop eating, and save some for another day.

At the end of the day it is fun and you should get fitter! It is definitely worth a download and a play when you get a moment.

As of 24th September there are:-
288,043 turfers, 78M zones taken, 1,099,831 this round, 60,348 yesterday.
App Launched 10th July 2010. Founder is Andreas Pantesjö. The first official zone was "NackaZone" located east of central Stockholm in the kommun of Nacka, at the south Entrance of the Nacka Forum shopping centre, whose new underground car park was the scene of some Indoor-O a few years ago from the Stockholm Indoor Cup crew. The first registered turfer was "felixfelox".