

# Plan your Macnab

You've decided to take the Challenge but where should you go? **Alexandra Henton** finds estates geared up to help you on loch, hill and heather



**A**S the 12th of August approaches there are those keen to be on the moor. But for a small, sometimes lucky, always sporting, group, the brace of grouse will be a part of something infinitely more exhilarating: a Macnab.

*The Field's* Macnab Challenge celebrates its sixth year, and second in association with Pol Roger Champagne, Glenfarclas Whisky and Hine Cognac. The appeal of the Challenge is attested to every year by the Macnabbers. They aren't grouse boys, they aren't only boys, they aren't necessarily expert fishermen. But they are unfailingly imbued with sporting enthusiasm for every part of the Macnab Challenge.

Our modern-day Leithen, Palliser-Yeates and Lord Lamanchas are regularly afflicted with the opposite of the famous ennui. Not for them idle hours cogitating how best to enthrall the spirit. They are more likely to be looking for a pause in the relentless pace of life, an exeat to the hill being the perfect antidote for anyone of a sporting bent. But, unlike Buchan's trio, the modern Macnabber has sporting agents and sporting estates at the ready to accommodate the attempt.

"If you were to imagine your dream sporting destination it is likely that it would look much like Amhuinnsuidhe. It is a bewitching place to spend any time and the wild sport is matched by the comfort of the castle," says

Mungo Ingleby of CKD Galbraith. "The Ladies Loch or the Castle river gives every chance of a confidence-boosting pre-breakfast fish, leaving the remainder of the day free to head for the hill." Amhuinnsuidhe, on the Isle of Harris, is generally let on an exclusive use basis. Occasionally the castle and sport are let to small groups or individuals during "mixed" weeks. Macnab attempts at Amhuinnsuidhe cost £1,500; full-board accommodation (exclusive of alcohol) is £223 per night per person; exclusive use from £28,600.

Eishken on the Isle of Lewis is one of the great Hebridean stalking estates. "The ability to put out multiple rifles and rods across wild hill and shimmering loch means that there is

chance of a stag," reveals Ingleby. Short-break and single-day trips are accepted. A Macnab attempt costs £1,600 plus VAT.

CKD Galbraith can also pull together attempts with sport from more than one estate, although this is likely to be more expensive because of the greater number of estate staff involved: from £1,750 plus VAT.

"One of the biggest stumbling blocks to success on a Macnab attempt is low water," says Ingleby. "Due to the habitat of grouse and red deer the majority of Macnab attempts take place in the upper reaches of mainland rivers. In a spate the salmon should be the easiest part of the equation but in a dry spell catching a salmon can be very tricky indeed. If it looks like you are going to be faced with low water across a sporting week investigate the possibility of taking fishing lower down the river, where water height is less of a crucial issue."

"Tulchan estate of Glenisla, Angus (not to be confused with Tulchan in Speyside)

**Clockwise from left: spying at Borge Lodge estate; Macnabber Joseph Thompson; salmon fishing from a boat at Borge Lodge; Peter Glenser celebrates with staff at Amhuinnsuidhe**

promotes sustainable fieldsports activities and is an estate of around 15,000 acres in the heart of the Grampian mountains, marching with Invercauld, Airlie and Balmoral," says owner Lucie Boedts. Boedts was one of four Macnabbers from Tulchan in 2014, three of them women. "It is principally a deer forest with the prime stalking ground known as Caenlochan, and is astonishingly beautiful. While it feels remote, it is, in fact, less than two hours' drive from Edinburgh. The highest hill is the 3,504ft Glas Maol, from which the views are truly spectacular."

Two rifles are allowed on the hill per day, on the east and west beats. Although there are no salmon rivers on the estate there is an arrangement with nearby Dalnaglar Castle for guests to fish the water there, under the eye of Dougy Morison from Kinnear Fishing.

"There is also the 'Tulchan Macnab' or double Macnab," says Boedts. This comprises two stags, two salmon and two braces of grouse and was managed in less than five hours by Vincent Le Brun last year.

A week at Tulchan, including cook and assistant, costs £4,800 plus VAT for up to 14 guests. The Tulchan Macnab costs £1,600 >



ample sport for the entire party and it all takes place in splendid isolation and great comfort. Finding a salmon among the sea-trout is the hardest part of the Challenge but there are few more magical places to attempt it," says Ingleby. Exclusive use only: fully catered, inclusive of the use of estate boats, from £9,500 plus VAT per week.

Urrard's 2,500 acres in Highland Perthshire provide a more central location to undertake the Macnab Challenge. "The estate has a reputation for showing pheasants and partridges of exceptional quality. What is less well known is that Urrard has a private stretch of the River Garry, pockets of hill that always hold grouse and, in late season, a very good





**Above: Tulchan Lodge. Below: Loch Fincastle. Below, far right: a view from a Taransay ridge**

plus VAT, exclusive to guests at Tulchan Lodge. It's available through George Goldsmith.

"Borve estate on Harris is owned by an ex-war correspondent and both he and the estate manager have been busy developing it," says George Goldsmith. "The main lodge has just finished renovations and is now ready to take guests." The estate runs to more than 3,750 acres and also owns the island of Taransay, where the stalking takes place. Salmon fishing is from a boat on Loch Laxdale or Loch Fincastle, or sea pools that are fishable from the bank. Hiring the lodge, which sleeps 18 guests, includes all fishing and the services of three gillies. For 2016, the rate is £20,000 inclusive of VAT on a fully catered basis. Stags are charged at £500 including VAT.

Peter Swales is a sporting agent based in Scotland. "I work with Mark Adams of EJ Churchill. We provide sport at various times for each other's clients," he says. Swales has already organised a Macnab attempt for a

group in August at a lodge which has been tenanted by a friend. "Anywhere there are stags, salmon and grouse a Macnab is possible," he says. "But nothing is guaranteed. The main thing is to have enough personnel available to make it happen, so when you have caught your fish you are ready to go straight to the hill. It is much harder to organise as an individual but it can be done. It is either forward planning or completely accidental."

Finally, the most successful hunting ground to date for Macnabbers has been the Gannochy estate in Glen Esk, Angus, which is geared up to the Macnab Challenge. Headkeeper David Clement is the man who makes the Macnabs happen. If an early start on the North Esk (six miles of which is owned by the estate) results in a salmon before breakfast, the Gannochy rules state that the Macnab is on and the shooting and stalking take place on the hill above. This compact estate is paradise for potential Macnabbers but the opportunity to savour a Macnab is available only to those taking a whole sporting week at The Steadings. Price on application. ■



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## CHOOSE A CHALLENGE

### REAL MACNAB

A salmon on the fly and a stag, as the trio did in John Buchan's *John Macnab*. They must be "poached" in legal sporting manner from an owner who accepts the challenge.

### CLASSIC MACNAB

A stag, a salmon and a brace of grouse. This Macnab epitomises the best of country sports in the Highlands.

### SOUTHERN MACNAB

A couple of snipe, a sea-trout and a roe buck.

### MACMARSH

A foreshore goose, a pike and a fallow buck.

### MACNORFOLK

A bass on the fly, brace of wild grey partridges and a fallow buck.

### MACVERMIN

An impressive rat, a chalkstream pike and a brace of magpies in the bag.

### MACSCANDI

A moose, capercaillie and a trout on the fly.

### MACARGENTINIAN

A golden dorado, 100 brace of doves and a wild pig, the northern Argentinian Macnab.

### MACAFRICAN

A brace of sandgrouse, an impala and a tigerfish in one day.

### MACCHARLIE

Riding to foxhounds, harriers and staghounds.

### CORINTHIAN MACNAB

Riding to hounds in the morning, shooting a brace of partridges in the afternoon and then catching a trout on the fly. All Macnabs must be completed between dawn and dusk. Visit [www.macnabchallenge.co.uk](http://www.macnabchallenge.co.uk) for all the terms and conditions.

