

The McDougal - a sporting challenge

Most self-respecting fishermen and shooters are aware of the elements that make up a Macnab, that highly prized and often elusive challenge comprise a stag, a brace of grouse and a wild salmon – all obtained in the one day. Earlier this year the owners of Ashbourne, a small sporting estate in East Sussex devised a new concept which they believe had not previously been tried. It too comprises three elements involving different skills, shooting, fly tying and fishing. Specifically these involve shooting a cock pheasant in the morning and then during the lunch break tying a fly using the tail feathers (pheasant tail nymph [PTN]) and in the afternoon catching a trout from one of the two lakes at Ashbourne with the home tied fly.

It has been named a McDougal and it offers those in southern areas (where there are somewhat less grouse!) a new challenge and bit of a change within the game and fly fishing season. Could a McDougal be achieved? It was necessary to wait until the start of the shooting season and whilst fly fishing was still viable (given the temperature) at Ashbourne, to find out.

The first McDougal day recently took place in November. As the shoot



Successful 'McDougaler' Richard Vardy (left) with Ashbourne estate owner Douglas Chalmers.

is a walked-up morning using dogs to flush out the birds from woodland and cover there is a limit to the number of participants (four or five is about right). A benefit of such numbers is that it makes for a very personal and enjoyable day. After coffee in the fishing lodge and a brief description of the area to shoot the 'McDougalers' set off. By lunchtime those with a cock bird were able to adjourn in the knowledge that so far, their McDougal quest was alive and well.

Following a hearty lunch of venison casserole from the estate, consumed with a few glasses of claret (bearing in mind the need to tie a convincing fly) the "McDougalers" were given a helpful demonstration of how to tie an alluring PTN fly. During the afternoon (before the light goes at this time of the year) a variety of PTN patterns, with the odd gold head, were cast into the clear spring fed lakes in anticipation of a take.

Happily Richard Vardy, one of the four, achieved all three elements successfully. Added to the spoils of the day were a crystal trophy and a bottle of champagne to celebrate the first ever McDougal. The Ashbourne estate has a private fishing syndicate and arranges small and exclusive days for companies and private functions in the summer. It now has a new attraction for the early winter season. ■



The spoils of the day, the pheasant and trout.

For details of Ashbourne, the fishing syndicate or the McDougal contact Douglas Chalmers Dougchalmers@aol.com or visit www.ashbourncountry.com