

# Venue DETECTIVE

A trip to Lincolnshire is in store for **Andy May** as he travels to Shortferry Leisure, an angling complex that has lots to offer anglers and families alike.

## THE VENUE SHORTFERRY LEISURE

This popular complex was established in the 1960s. Set in the small village of Fiskerton, the 60-acre site lies just a few miles outside the historic cathedral city of Lincoln. It's also situated well for visits to the coastal towns of Skegness and Mablethorpe. Hosting over 200 caravans, some privately owned and others available for relaxing breaks, as well as 60 hook-ups and facilities for touring, Shortferry provides the perfect getaway for families. With a games room and play areas on site, as well as the Tyrwhitt Arms pub, a well-stocked tackle shop, and the shopping city of Lincoln nearby, there's something for everyone!

The oldest of the five lakes is The Marina. This was originally connected to the Old River Witham, providing moorings for boats. In 1988 it was made into a fishing lake and now has a thriving head of silvers, with the odd rugged river carp still lurking!

The most recent lake to be developed is Match Lake, stocked full of carp between 8oz and 4lb. There's also Owl Lake, guaranteeing year-round sport to keep kids interested in fishing. Willow Lake is a well-established and picturesque pool containing a generous mix of quality silver fish and carp. Match weights regularly exceed 100lb here!

For those in search of a real beast there's a new specimen lake about to open, which contains a mix of carp from double figures right up to 20lb plus!

If the lakes don't offer enough variety, there's over a mile and a half of the Old River Witham and Barlings Drain to target. These border the site and present anglers with a mouthwatering weir pool and many more swims. In winter the roach sport is hectic, while bream and tench provide excellent summer action!

### LOCATION

Ferry Road, Fiskerton, Lincoln LN3 4HU

Day tickets: Match Lake only £5 pre-booked

Contact: 01526 398021

Web: [www.matchtackle.com](http://www.matchtackle.com)  
[www.shortferry.co.uk](http://www.shortferry.co.uk)

After a cold night, Andy got his first bites in a deep hole on his short swim.

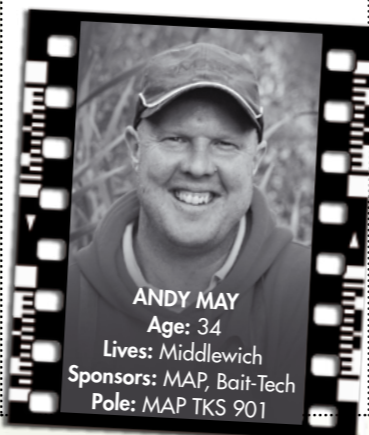


Willow Lake contains plenty of these chunky roach-rudd hybrids

### MEET THE EXPERT

Andy May is a hugely respected, all-round match angler, a silver medallist for England at youth level and three-time Matchman Of The Year! He is now arguably the top angling coach in the country and can be booked online at [www.fishingcoaching.co.uk](http://www.fishingcoaching.co.uk).

- Three-time Kamasan Matchman Of The Year
- Youngest ever Matchman Of The Year
- World youth individual silver medallist
- Sky TV's venue expert for the Fish 'O' Mania final
- Full-time angling coach
- All-round nice guy!



**W**e all experience those days when things don't go exactly according to plan but at this time of year they seem to happen quite regularly.

I've been excited about my trip to Shortferry Leisure in Lincolnshire for months but as my luck would have it I ended up loading the car in gale-force winds and freezing temperatures. Nevertheless, I was off to explore another new venue and the excitement of fishing took over straightaway!

Following a mild spell of weather for the time of year we had dropped into a real big freeze.

On arriving at Shortferry I feared the worst for fishing but was soon jaw-dropped by the sheer size of the complex. The entrance hosts a delightful pub, before the site opens up into a very neat caravan park. I soon discovered a well-stocked tackle shop where I met the owner, Rob Hardman, and his assistant, Geoff Kelwick.

After a quick coffee, I was shocked to discover that this site not only has five lakes but also a stretch of the Old River Witham and a length of the Barlings Drain – I was thinking of staying for the week already!

### WIND DRIVEN

Temperatures had plummeted to minus 3°C the previous night and the wind was blowing very strongly from the east. I'm sure you've heard the saying "when the wind blows from the east, the fish bite least!" Fortunately, we decided to fish on Willow Lake, which was well sheltered at the top end. This water has all kinds of features to offer, including two luscious islands with large willow trees and several reed-lined bays. Hopefully, with the little bit of shelter that I had, I'd be able to prove the saying wrong!



Andy was careful not to 'oosh' too much bait in!

### THINKING VARIETY

After doing some homework I found out the lake was stocked with all kinds of species. There's a good head of carp that range from 4lb all the way up to 20lb! It would be nice to get among some of these but big carp are among the first fish to stop feeding in the cold! Still, there's a good head of silvers to target, including roach, rudd, the odd chub, and even barbel. I've brought a variety of baits in case things don't go to plan and I'm going to keep my options open to catch some silver fish and the odd carp if they're having a munch. A pint of red and white maggots should suffice for the silvers, while 2mm micro pellets, 4mm expanders and a tin of corn cover me for the carp. One thing was for sure, I had my 'ooshing' hand tied down and didn't plan of feeding lots of bait!

### SWIM CHOICE

I kept things simple with rigs and set up two to cover three swims. The first was to fish at just six metres, where I planned to loose feed maggots by hand. I then plumbed two swims at 13 metres, positioned at angles of 10 o'clock and two o'clock. On the swim to my right I planned to feed corn with a few pellets and maggots and a few micros to my left. I found about four feet on both my 13m swims. However, >>>

on the shorter line there was a slightly deeper hole dropping off into four and a half feet – a great feature to discover in these winter conditions!

I set up a 4x12 MAP SD2 float for my 13m swims, using 0.14mm line to a 0.12mm hooklength. I was planning to vary the hook baits here between corn and pellet, so I opted for a size 18 Drennan Wide Gape Pellet hook. Shotting was a bulk just below half depth, with two No10 droppers below. A long line between pole tip and float gave me better rig control in the gusting wind too. I placed three No8 back shot a foot above the float as well.

On the shorter rig I opted for a lighter 4x10 SD2 with the same bulk but three smaller No11 droppers. I used a lighter 0.10 hooklength and a size 20 Drennan Silverfish Pellet hook here and started the session using yellow MAP hollow core elastic for everything that swims!

#### SAFE START

I was conscious to approach the swim with the utmost caution in the terrible conditions. I introduced just six grains of corn and the same amount of micros on my right-hand swim and a pinch of micros with a dozen or so maggots on the left swim. The only place my ooshing arm was going to get any action was on the short swim, where even here I planned to introduce just 12 to 15 maggots every few minutes. Feeding by hand can still be effective in winter because the noise and spread of bait over a large area helps draw fish in.

#### FISH FINDER

A great little tip in winter is to use a very light plummet and drag it around the swim. You will actually feel fish with the



Rotating swims is a great way to keep fish coming in winter.

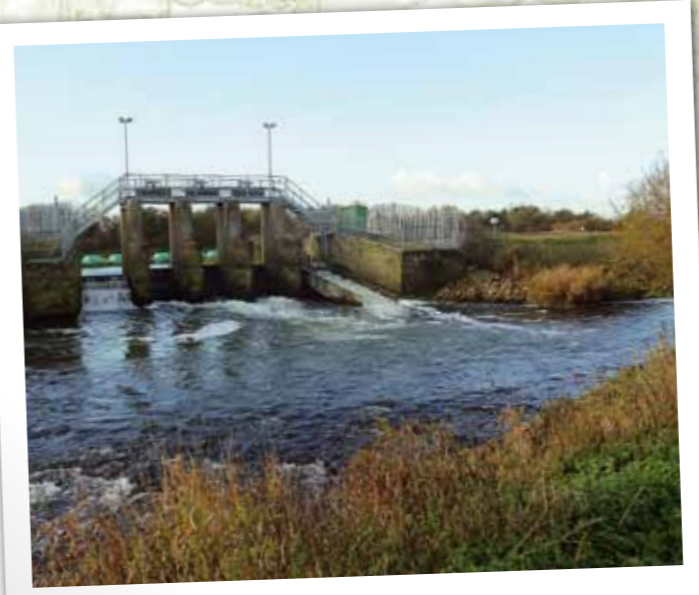
plummet and while plumbing I bumped into some on my right-hand swim.

Before I fed anything here, I had a cheeky go with a corn-skin hook bait to see if I could tempt an early fish. Unfortunately, after 15 biteless minutes it was time to feed. Still, I stayed on this right-hand swim for the first part of the session and was confident in catching a carp after feeling a few with my plummet! The wind was still bad and even with my Eskimo hat on I was a little shivery. With no bites forthcoming we were in for a

long day and it was going to be a case of waiting until the carp's dinner time!

#### KEEP CHANGING

I like to try different baits at this time of year to see what the fish want. One that I have caught loads of fish over the years is a corn skin. It works so well because of its bright colour and it flutters to the bottom slowly. It's imperative to keep working your bait at this time of year. I often see anglers sat with the



There's over a mile and a half of the Old River Witham to explore at Shortferry!



The new Match Lake guarantees plenty of bites from smaller carp and silver fish.

rig motionless, which gives them little chance of attracting a fish's attention. You have to try to really encourage fish into taking your bait; sometimes they will take it out of anger. If someone was constantly offering me a burger, I'd take one eventually! However, the fish weren't sharing my passion for food and despite rotating swims to try and tease a fish onto the hook, they weren't playing ball.

#### SHORT SUCCESS

After spending quite a lot of time in search of carp, it was time to try the short swim. As my small dropper shots settled the float trembled before disappearing. Woohoo... I was into my first fish! It wasn't a carp but on such a hard day I didn't care. In fact, I was chuffed to bits when a roach-rudd hybrid came shimmering to the surface and at around 10oz I couldn't wait to get back out.

Next put-in I had another bite from a 4oz fish and just when I thought they'd turned up things went quiet again.

#### DOWNSCALE

For the next 30 minutes I had the occasional indication and felt like these clever silvers were being extra-timid. I'm not normally one for scaling down but I even tried a 0.08mm hooklength! I got the impression that there were plenty of silver fish present, so I decided to maximise my chances of getting bites and fed maggots on all of my swims.

When you can only catch a fish or two from each swim, it pays to keep rotating them. I couldn't catch more than one fish off each line without them spooking. However, by dripping in a few maggots on each with a Toss Pot, I enjoyed a spell of catching quality roach and interesting-looking hybrids!

#### ON THE MOVE

As the session progressed into the afternoon, the freezing wind dropped and the occasional patch of blue sky started to appear! I'd noticed a couple of carp roll in front of one of the islands and a local angler walking round the lake mentioned that he'd caught big carp from that swim earlier in the week.

As the sun came out I became more desperate to catch carp and decided to up camp and have the last few hours on a different swim.

#### INSTANT ACTION

I settled into the new swim and on plumbing up bumped some fish with my plummet straightaway. Without feeding, I went straight in and this time the float buried after just a few minutes... ooosh! The culprit waddled off towards the island before turning and swimming back towards me. As I started to strip the elastic from my puller kit, the inevitable happened and the hook pulled. I didn't swear... honest! >>>

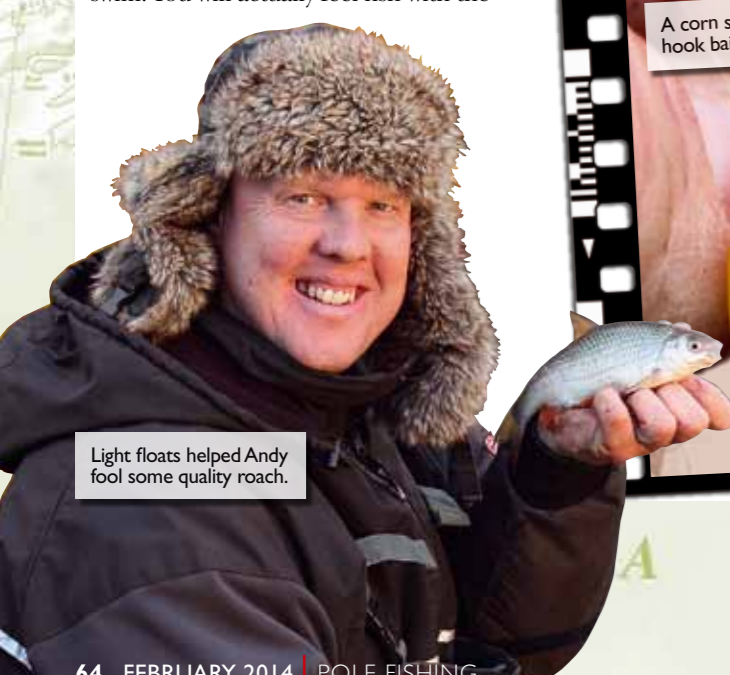


"Please, please, please stay on this time!"



A corn skin was first-choice hook bait for carp.

Big carp often shy away from any large amounts of feed.



Light floats helped Andy fool some quality roach.

The wind had really dropped by now and I decided to place a tiny amount of bait in the swim. After a five-minute wait, the float dinked under again and this time the fish shot straight for the gap between the islands. I'm sure this fish was foul hooked and came off yet again. I was obviously sat right on a pocket of fish that didn't want to feed and I feared the worst for hooking one properly.

**FRUSTRATING FINISH**

The light was beginning to fade and next put-in I lifted up to move the bait and foul hooked another big fish – erm, that one fell off too! At this point I'd lost four big fish, all potentially foul hooked. Carp will often lie dormant just off the bottom in winter, and if they don't want to feed, they won't!

With only a short period of light remaining, I hooked into a fish that was definitely in the mouth. I played this one to the net but before I had the chance to perform one of my lucky scoops, the hook pinged out again! At this point I definitely had a moment of Tourettes!

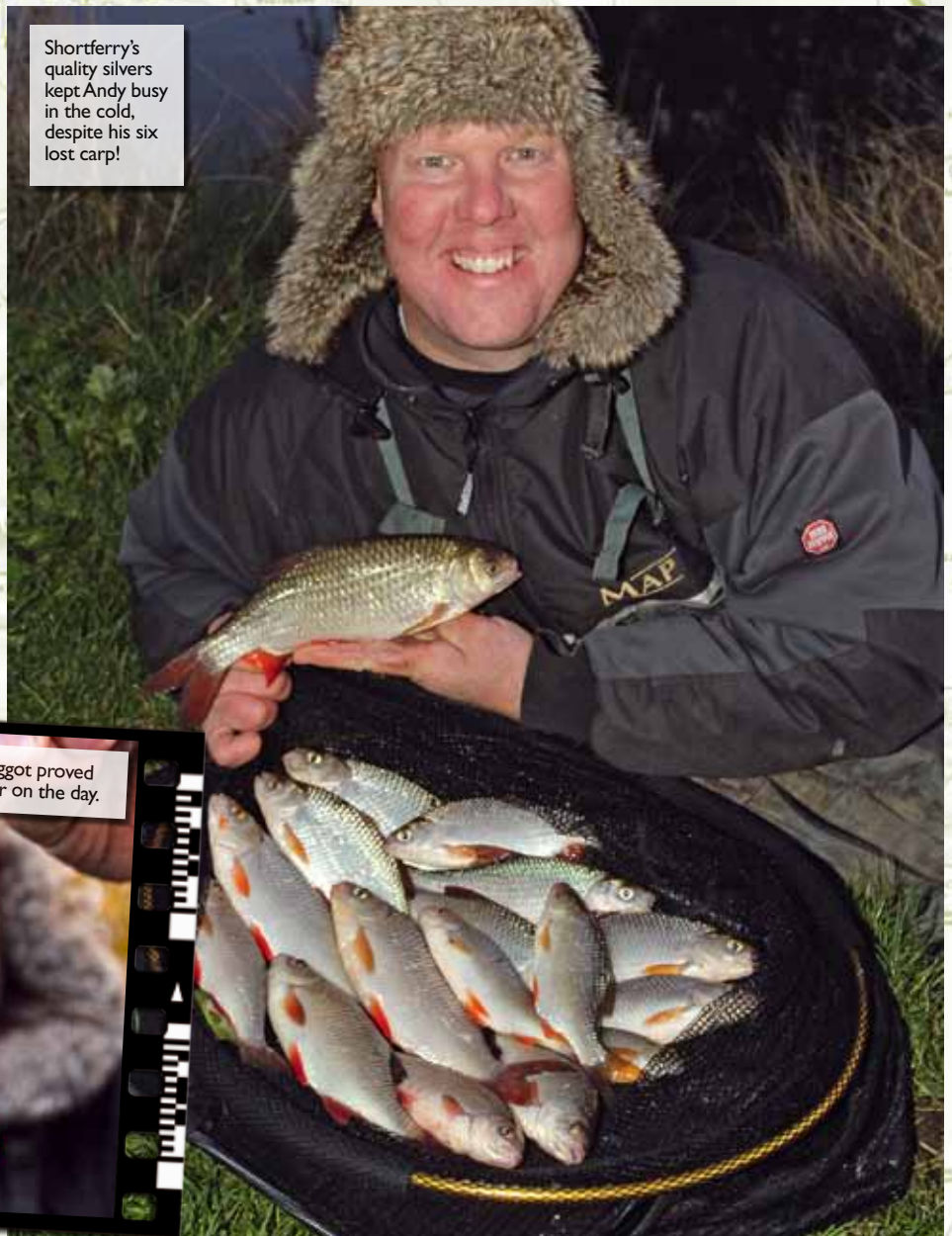
**SILVER SUCCESS**

It was time to get a catch shot with the silvers I'd caught earlier and on lifting the net out there was a lot more than I expected! If we'd had a spell of mild weather I could have bagged a mega-weight of these fish. They were all in pristine condition too. After returning the fish, I couldn't help but have another drop-in; I was so frustrated with the lost fish!

It was virtually dark and I could only just see the float. The black pimple dinked and on picking up I hooked

another fish. It's a good job I had yellow elastic to see where it was going. Breaking down on my top kit, everything went solid... it had snagged me! The fish gods were certainly against me on the day and the scores on the door finished at Team Carp six, Andy May nil!

Despite the lost fish, I enjoyed a lovely morning catching quality silvers at Shortferry and I'll certainly be back to have another go on the river! It just goes to show that even us sponsored anglers and so-called 'professionals' have frustrating days. However, with a double-figure net of quality silvers, I enjoyed every minute! ■



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