

Venue DETECTIVE

Natural Phenomenon!

Andy May travels to the beautiful **Woodside Fishery** on the day of the solar eclipse and enjoys the session of a lifetime!



THE VENUE WOODSIDE FISHERY

Woodside Fishery is an established fishing complex set within the beautiful rolling hills and pasture lands of the south Shropshire countryside. There are three pools available to the pleasure and match angler alike, all offering superb day-ticket fishing. The pools are heavily stocked with a variety of coarse fish, including, most predominantly, carp and tench, with large numbers of roach, rudd, bream, perch and chub.

Accommodation is also available on site, in the shape of several stunning log cabins. These are fully self-catering and offer spacious and comfortable accommodation with all modern facilities, off-road parking and a dedicated picnic area.

The pools and cabins are co-owned by Peter Hughes and his brother David. Together, they have taken great care and effort to create a very natural setting in which anglers, young and old, can come and enjoy themselves, irrespective of whether or not they catch fish all year round.

With Island Pool boasting a good head of carp, FIs and mixed silver fish, sport is prolific and match weights in excess of 100lb are commonplace. It is a similar story on Woodside and Charles Pool, while House Pool offers an altogether more intimate experience. It is a bite a chuck on here, with skimmers, tench, roach and carp making for a busy day's fishing.

For more information, be sure to check out the fishery's excellent website, www.woodsidefishery.co.uk, where full details about everything that is on offer are available.



Is it one of Woodside's notorious dinosaur perch?



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.

- 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!



ANDY MAY
Age: 35
Lives: Middlewich
Sponsors: MAP, Bait-Tech
Pole: MAP TKS 901

Well one thing is for sure, our British Isles are blessed with the most stunning scenery. It was an amazing drive on the way to this venue in deepest Shropshire, through tiny narrow lanes, over great big hills, sharp bends, long straight roads and I hardly saw another person.

I passed over the mighty River Severn, along with numerous little feeder streams, until I came upon a lovely little venue called Woodside Fishery. I got out of my van, smelled the fresh air, looked at all the lovely daffodils and listened to all the little birds singing... erm, enough of all that!

Apologies for sounding like Alan Titchmarsh, I was all snarled

up in the moment then. Let's get on with the fishing.

I had a walk round three lovely looking lakes and had a quick chat with some blokes who had been fishing here all week with very good results. They were staying in the stunning-looking log cabins that are on site, another bonus!

Considering the weather was still a little unsettled the fish were splashing around all over the place. The forecast was not looking good for later on in the session, however, with lots of lovely sunshine and even a total eclipse to look forward to – "Nothing I can do, a total eclipse of the heart." Sorry, I couldn't resist another singsong!

After a quick chat with the helpful owners, I decided to fish the first lake on the right as you drive in. I chose a lovely looking peg where I had plenty of options, an island out to 13 metres in



This bruiser took a liking to Andy's worm-mush attack!



front of me, open water round to my left and lots of perchy-looking reeds along my left-hand margin. The possibility of a great big angry perch was very appealing and they have been caught to over 4lb here, with lots around the 2lb mark coming out almost daily, oosh!

Worms would certainly play a part in my attack and I had a kilo of them, along with three pints of casters, two pints of red and white maggots, Bait-Tech 4mm Xpand pellets and a few Bait-Tech 2mm micros. I'd much prefer to have just a couple of tubs on my bait tray but I had lots of options in front of me and I wanted to get the best out of the swim. >>>

RIGS

I really fancied it for some big stripeys down my left-hand margin, it just looked perchy, so I set up a 4x12 MAP SD2 float using 0.13mm main line and 0.11mm hooklength to a size 16 B911 hook. Shotted-wise, I had a bulk and one dropper. Elastic was MAP double No5. I found three feet of water tight against the reeds; it did look very fishy!

Number two was a 'catch everything' rig to be fished at 13 metres in front of me against an island. I used a very light 4x8 float and shotted it with five No12s spread evenly up the line, which was 0.11mm to 0.09mm. Elastic choice was MAP double No4.

Because this was an exploring rig I set the depth around three feet, which I had a metre off the island. My last rig was to be fished in open water where I had just over five feet. I used a MAP 4x12 SD2 float shotted with a bulk of No10s and two No10 droppers. Line was 0.13mm to 0.11mm with a size 18 Kamasan B911 hook. Elastic choice was MAP double No5.

THE SESSION

I chopped up just a small handful of worms containing plenty of soil and added a few casters and dead red maggots to the mix. In went a small pot of this down the margin to my left. I then picked the catty up and pinged a few casters out towards the island.

Lastly, I cupped a small ball of micro pellets on my 13m swim into open water.

All swims were now fed and it was just after 9am and it was already feeling warm! I started on a single caster towards the island. I pinged out 10 or so casters and laid the rig in over them holding a tight line. It took all of three seconds to get my first bite, a lovely roach of around 4oz.

Next put-in I had its brother, followed by most of its cousins over the next 10 minutes, before I hooked into something

The pellet swim came good later in the session.



Teasing the fish by lifting and dropping the rig worked a treat!



that waddled off round the island. Luckily it swam back towards me and as I netted a lovely looking 3lb common, the eclipse was almost at its peak.

It was quite surreal and almost eerie – woo hoo! I was all snarled up in carp and eclipses!

Over the next hour on this line I caught a fish virtually every drop, with some lovely rudd and golden rudd also getting in on the action, but I didn't think this line was going anywhere so I changed and came on the margin swim.

Incidentally, I'd been feeding the swim with chopped worms every 15 minutes, along with my other swim in open water where a tiny ball of micros had been going in. I know I was only pleasure fishing but I always like to go into each session exactly how I would if I were in a match. That means constant feeding of other swims to give myself options.



You can catch a mixture of carp, F1s and plenty of different silver-fish species at Woodside!

It was proper T-shirt weather now and I was almost contemplating applying Ambre Solaire! Errrr, sun's out, guns out, woo hoo!

All too often I see anglers put their blinkers on when they start catching on one line. You have to make sure that you keep swims topped up ready for when you visit them. Only then can maximum extraction begin... oosh!

It was on with a large worm's tail into the margin and I didn't have to wait long before the float buried. I counted to two and gave a firm strike. Errr, the perch was considerably smaller than I'd hoped for!

Six more baby perch followed before I whacked into something that was a little angry, was this the double-figure perch I'd hoped for? Errr no, it was a great big carp. The fish was very angry and tried all the dirty tricks like trying to snag itself in the reeds. As if that wasn't enough, it tried to get under my platform; how dare it! After a five-minute tussle a beautiful common carp of around 8lb was safely in the net.

Back out with more worms and this time a big F1 was doing its best to imitate a perch. Ha ha, I really thought this was a big perch and my heart was in my mouth until I

saw that it had no spines or stripes... boo; it was immaculate looking though!

A couple more F1s soon followed before another angry carp was scooped. It was proper T-shirt weather now and I was almost contemplating applying Ambre Solaire! Errrr, sun's out, guns out, woo hoo!

The margin swim went quiet for a while, so I introduced a big pot of worms and casters and decided to leave it. Big carp were all over the surface now, just cruising around in the lovely warm sun! >>>



A worm and caster mush was fed down the margins, while a simple pellet attack did the damage in open water.

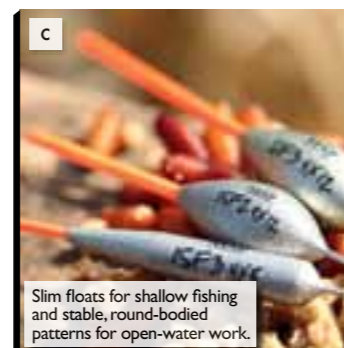
ANDY'S TACKLE AND BAIT



A large chunk of worm was the best hook bait on the margin swim.



A 4mm Bait-Tech expander was the simple hook bait that did the damage long.



Slim floats for shallow fishing and stable, round-bodied patterns for open-water work.

MODERN FISH NEED A MODERN BAIT

Designed and perfected to suit the needs of modern commercial anglers, Bait-Tech's high-protein F1 Groundbait Mix is packed with ground Xpand expander pellets and pure fishmeals. Together with an added sweet edge, this is THE ultimate commercial-fishery mix.

Suitable for all methods and species, particularly F1s, carp and bream, this is a complete mix with a fast breakdown that offers attraction and feed triggers in abundance.

Available in 2kg bags, F1 Groundbait Mix is a WINNER!



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I tried the open-water swim using a 4mm expander next and it was solid. Mainly with stockie carp up to 11lb but also F1s and skimmers. Every swim I tried produced fish – solid!

I went back on the caster swim and the silvers were still lined up. I came back down the margins and caught another couple of carp before the tiny perch moved in again. Most of the fish seemed to be in the open-water swim now that the sun was strong. I also set a mugging rig up but the carp wouldn't come close enough.

I really thought this was a big perch and my heart was in my mouth until I saw that it had no spines or stripes!

It was now 1pm and I'd already had a netful of fish. They were definitely getting ready for a big feed-up before spawning and that's when worms and casters will start to work really well because the fish go in search of high-protein baits to sustain them through spawning. Sorry to get all scientific there, I went off on one again didn't I?

Although it can be an expensive way of fishing, it can also be the most rewarding because everything swimming will go for worms and casters.

I ended the session on the pellet line and I had a brief spell of catching lovely skimmers. This really was a unique day that I will remember for a long time, what with the eclipse and the surroundings.

I finished up with a good 60lb mixed bag and enjoyed every second of it. Those big perch eluded me but I'll come back armed with drop-shot, spinners and lobworms... oosh! ■

The total eclipse came over the Shropshire countryside when Andy visited Woodside but it didn't stop him seeing the bite from this feisty carp!



A cracking mixed bag from a fishery that definitely gets Andy's thumbs up!

