

NEW VENUE KEEP IT SIMPLE!

Find out how to tackle an unknown venue for the first time, with **Andy Neal's** expert advice.

I have heard people raving about Lower Lake at Broadlands Lakes Fishery, near Southampton, so today I am going to look at just how you go about learning all about a new place. Being a cool 320-mile round trip for me, this is a venue that I cannot visit regularly. Two and a half hours each way is too much, even for a Welshman like me!

I really enjoy these exploratory trips, as you tend to see similar patterns on other venues but with their own little twists. It is these twists that need to be ironed out if you're going to get the most from a venue for your next visit.

So where do you start when tackling a venue blind? A surf on the Internet and a few e-mails soon confirmed that the place offered superb fishing and the gist I was getting was that, although there were plenty of carp to go at, this place was more noted for its huge head of skimmers and bream. Next port of call was a quick conversation with the fishery manager, who confirmed these reports. Never be afraid to pick up the phone, as fishery staff are usually willing to help and might even put you in contact with some of the regulars! »

VENUE FILE

BROADLANDS LAKES FISHERY

Location: Hill Street, Calmore, Southampton SO40 2RX
Day tickets: £10; concessions £8
Contact: 02380 869881 or 07969 165041
Website: www.broadlands-lake.co.uk

ANGLER FILE

ANDY NEAL

Age: 31
Lives: Abergavenny
Sponsors: Frenzee, Bait-Tech
Pole: Frenzee P1 666

Andy spends an interesting session trying to suss out the best way to catch the Broadlands' bream.



A switch to the double-bulk bagging rig pays dividends later in the session.



Andy looks for any deviation in depth when plumbing up.

How to attack a venue is important. Quite simply, you cannot do everything so you need to decide which methods are going to be most beneficial to try on the day. I've examined previous results and thought about what I'm looking to achieve. With the weather cooling down rapidly the carp may not dominate things and from what I gather they are mainly caught on the feeder tight to the island.

With a large head of skimmers resident I want to focus all my attentions on what weight of these can be caught, and how to catch them. The match angler in me wants to see how important to overall weights the bream can be and the ways to catch them most effectively. Doing this should also let me gauge what sort of weights of carp I would need to justify me fishing for them instead. For instance, 10lb of rod-caught carp is no good when you could have 20lb of bream in the

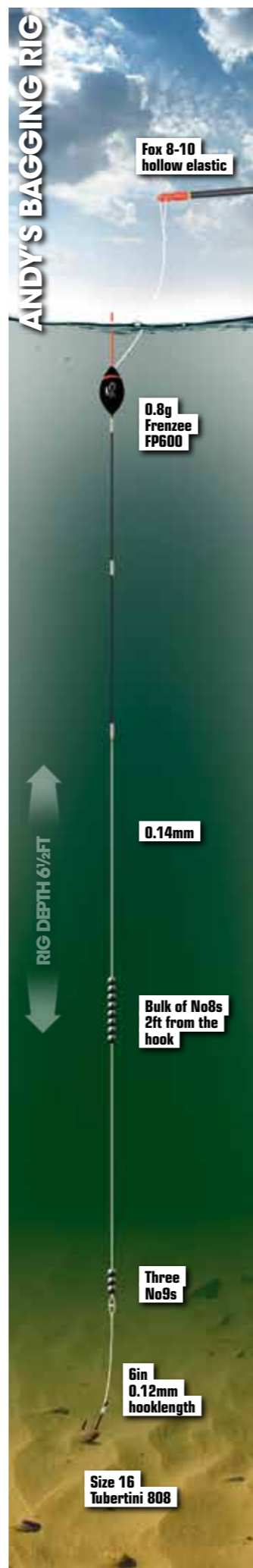
same time on the pole.

I really want to investigate the bream potential of Lower Lake, so on arrival I've walked several laps of the pool to decide where best to fish. Remember, you don't learn anything from simply sitting somewhere comfortable with no fish in front of you – you only learn from getting bites! With this in mind I've decided to fish where I think the bream will be living.

The shape of the lake means that one bank stands out from the others, as there is a greater distance to the main island that runs down the middle. Bream love a bit of space rather than being hemmed into a corner or in narrower areas. My days as a youngster on the canals also back this up, as the best bream pegs were always the wides or turning bays for the boats. So, with the area of the lake selected I've picked a swim right in the middle, where I hope the fish will be.

The next problem is what bait to use! I have with me everything I think bream will like, from pinkies and maggots through to worms, casters, hemp, corn, meat, groundbait and a load of pellets, both hard and soft and in various sizes. Where do you start? Well the answer is quite simply to make an educated guess and keep things simple.

For instance, the two main baits I have in mind today are the worm and caster or soft pellets – baits we know bream love.



Two dead maggots are Andy's starting gambit.



A grain of corn is tried later...



... but a 6mm expander pellet is the best hooker on the day.



These balls are cupped in to kick off the 'negative' swim.



Loose-fed softened 4mms are catapulted over the 'positive' swim.



Andy deliberately doesn't feed worms and casters at the start as he isn't sure how big the head of nuisance species is.

This isn't really the time to be trying out new baits and groundbaits, so stick with what you know and have confidence in. As an example, the only groundbait I have brought is 2kg of Bait-Tech Karma, simply because it's caught me skimmers at waters all over the country at all times of year. This is the confidence you need to take to the water with you.

So what do I fish? Worms? Pellets? Both? I've decided to keep things simple and to start by just fishing pellets for a number of reasons. Firstly, as the venue holds plenty of skimmers there is nothing to suggest there aren't loads of roach present too. Therefore I don't want to start putting in lots of casters only to get 'bitted out' by small roach. Secondly, each bait can be fished a number of ways; cupped in neat, with or over groundbait or loose fed. To try and do this while using two different baits will just cause me a headache!

Thirdly, this is a commercial fishery and should see a lot of pellets, so the fish will be more than used to eating them. Lastly, I find it easier to turn a pellet swim into a worm-and-caster line later on than vice versa. The small fish that worms and casters can potentially attract could mean I need to start a completely new swim elsewhere, thus meaning a lot of wasted time and effort.

I have decided to fish two long lines and one short. The short swim will be used to kick off on while the two longer ones will be used to try positive and negative feeding methods.

I have been told to expect depths in the region of five to eight feet so the first rig out of my box is a 0.6g Frenzee FP600 float on 0.14mm diameter main line, to which I attach a 6in hooklength of 0.12mm with a size 16 Tubertini 808 hook. This will be fished an inch or two overdepth to start with. Coupled with my favourite doubled No5 elastic I should be able to land anything, including carp should they turn up.

Before any other rigs are assembled I put a plummet on and spend 20 minutes trying to thoroughly map out the bottom. You need to know exactly what is in front of you and what shelves or slopes there are, as any feature or hole missed could be crucial. I take it section by section and plumb from as far right across to as far to the left as I can.

My peg has a very steep slope close in dropping to about six and a half feet, where it is then flat everywhere all the way out to 16 metres. This makes the short swim a simple choice. I usually like to find the bottom of the slope and come up six inches but, as it is so steep, I've decided to move to the bottom of it and go a foot past it. This way, the fish will hopefully graze confidently as I will be just past any rubbish and heavy silt that may have built up at the bottom of the slope. With this depth being the same as the depth on the two 13m swims

that I have earmarked, my rigs can also be kept simple.

The next rig out of the box is what will hopefully turn out to be my bagging rig! It is a heavier, 0.8g FP600 float with similar end tackle but with a slightly heavier 8-10 hollow elastic set very soft. Both rigs have a bulk two feet from the hook. The light rig has two No9s evenly spread to the hook while the heavier rig will be fished double-bulk style with three No9s bulked together just above the hooklength.

This is a positive rig that bombs the bait straight to the deck. It enables me to lay some line on the bottom and fish for 'hold-ups' or be super positive for fishing dead depth, as any movement of the mini-bulk shows up immediately on the float.

I have also set up a slim and sensitive 0.5g Frenzee FP500 for fishing dead depth, but this time with a spread bulk at roughly half depth with three No10 droppers. The terminal tackle is the same, again coupled with doubled No5 elastic. This will be used for finicky bites and fish intercepting the bait near the

bottom. Finally, I have a 0.2g FP600 float set up to fish about four feet deep just in case the fish decide to come off the deck.

This way I have all depths covered and can quickly react to changes in the fishes' feeding habits.

The short line is fed with a single ball of groundbait containing micro pellets, dead maggots and a few soaked 4mm feed pellets and grains of corn. This is my starting zone to try and determine what I can catch. It also gives me somewhere to try while my longer lines settle.

My two 13m swims are kept several metres apart. The first is fed with six balls of groundbait, again containing pellets, corn and dead maggots, which I cup in to make as little commotion as possible. This will be my 'negative' swim as I don't intend to feed a lot more over the top of this to begin with, to see if they

I HAVE ALL DEPTHS COVERED AND CAN QUICKLY REACT TO CHANGES.

will be happiest feeding over an initial carpet of feed.

The second 13m swim will be fed with a large pot of 4mm pellets and a big ball of softened micros. This is my positive line, over the top of which I will loose feed 4mm soft feed pellets. I call this my positive swim as catapulting pellets will cover a larger area. This should help the fish gain confidence and hopefully draw more feeding fish in. If they are happy with loose feed falling around them then I will be confident of catching a big weight. It's something that has worked for me a lot this year, so there is no reason why it won't work here.

Two dead maggots on the hook are my starting gambit as they will catch anything that swims without being overly attractive to any small stuff. First drop-in, however, and the float doesn't even settle. A sharp lift sees an inch-long roach come flying towards me! Another immediately after sees me quickly swap to the 0.6g rig to hopefully get the bait down through these little pests. This doesn't work, so the next attempt is a 4mm soft pellet. The rig finally settles properly and a few minutes pass before it slides away. A firm lift and the first skimmer of the day graces my net. It's not massive but a 1lb fish gives me confidence. The decision not to feed casters seems a good one so far!

Strangely, nothing more follows and throwing a few pellets over the top doesn't work either. With 20 minutes gone it's time to try my 13m groundbait swim. I ship out a 4mm expander, lay the rig in and the float slides away. Plain sailing from here, I think. Wrong! I am catching but having to wait up to 10 minutes for a positive bite. There is a lot of activity that definitely isn't just roach but they aren't picking up my hook bait.

Swinging over to my positive swim, where I've been loose feeding pellets since the off, again



Some of the bream are proper bronzed beauties!

an instant bite results in another lovely 2lb skimmer. I drop the rig back in and instantly hook another. Is positive feeding the key? I continue to catch, all the while pinging eight to 12 pellets, but then the fish slow down and I start suffering liners as they come off the bottom. I cannot keep them at one depth so I take the decision to really up the feed to try and force them back down. This often works but absolutely kills the swim today!

No more fish follow until I hook a 3lb carp. Ten minutes later and another small carp

is hooked. This is a disaster, as not only am I having to wait a long time but the carp are only the same size as the bream. They clearly want a bit of feed but too much is detrimental,

while pinging bait sees them at all depths. Time to change my feeding again to nail them down.

A top-up is in order so I decide to feed my negative groundbait swim with another ball containing micros and 4mms. Rather than leave the swim to settle I go straight in over it. With a 6mm expander the float buries instantly and a 4lb bream is nodding its way to the net! I ship out again and am soon playing another large skimmer. Is this the key?

Six fish later the swim is fading so I cup in another ball. Immediately they are back and

I SHIP OUT, LAY THE RIG IN AND THE FLOAT SAILS AWAY.



Part of Andy's final catch and the result of thinking hard about the best way to feed.

I am now catching really well. Swapping to the 0.8g double-bulk rig, more fish follow before the swim fades after six fish. A pattern of feeding and catching has emerged and it's now a skimmer fest!

I've continued feeding the loose-fed pellet swim but they haven't really wanted to settle on it. Potting in balls over the groundbait swim has kept fish to 6lb coming and after four hours I've called it a day. With 70lb in the keepnet I am more than pleased and, importantly, I have also learnt a lot.

Although I have varied my hook baits, soft expanders were by far the best. The two different swims have clearly showed that they wanted plenty of bait, but within reason. They were shying away from lots of loose feed but were quite happy to come and devour a ball of groundbait laced with pellets. Discoveries made over the loose-fed swim have made me push my groundbait line and start attacking that.

I have effectively transformed a negatively fed swim into a positive one and caught well from it.

By working hard a slightly frustrating session has turned into a very productive one. It also gives me a great idea for future visits and what sort of carp weight I would need to make it beneficial to target them instead.

Although I didn't try worms and casters, the speed with which I was catching at times proved to me that pellets were the best bait on the day. My decision to not feed casters was also right as the amount of small roach was staggering. That said, I will never leave home without them when bream are concerned!

A little thought and research has helped me make the right decisions to get the most of a one-off session. The key word for me is 'simple'. So, the next time you are faced with a new venue, keep things simple, make educated guesses and reap the rewards. **POLE FISHING**