

# EDITOR TIM PAISLEY'S CARP LEADER



Essex down on the Church Pool.

## Nashville, Essex



**K**evin Nash would like you to go down and put together a couple of features about his lakes," said Pip, quite some time ago. "He'd like you to fish down there," she said, as an afterthought. There you go... There are some things you just have to do as editor, including whatever the advertising department asks you to do! Not that I needed a reason to go down and renew the acquaintance of my old friend Kev and spend some time with him on his Essex estate, and not that advertising was ever an issue as part of the deal. Kev was obviously missing me... And so it was arranged. I would go down during the last week in April, fish the Church Pool for a few days and compile three features with Kev, one Big Interview and two about the formation, stocking, upkeep and potential of his two lakes, the Copse Lake and Church Pool.

When I last stayed at Kev's his Essex estate was a comparatively new project, and the lakes were just being dug. At that time I felt that the idea of having your business in your 'back garden' (all 14 acres of it!) might be a mistake, but Kev was sold on the idea, and it has obviously worked out. I spent some time in the offices when I arrived; there is a very

harmonious atmosphere and Kev seems very comfortable with the team he has around him – which includes his oldest son Lee, who is a whizz-kid on the computers. With his failing eyesight it is imperative that Kev has people around him he can trust and rely on, which puts a big onus on his right-hand man in Nash Tackle, Alan Blair, and the

figurehead of the bait side of the business, the seasoned Gary Bayes. Alan it was who greeted me when I arrived. Kev, Alan and I had a couple of cups of tea on the back veranda – which overlooks the stock pond (which is in the back garden and is absolutely heaving with carp) – then I was shown round the two main lakes.

I'd heard gossip about the waters and their contents but in all honesty I was totally in the dark about the state of play down there. Over the next few days I was to learn all I wanted to know about the waters. The three of us walked along an undulating hardcore path flanked by trees in blossom and at the bottom of the path on the right was the Copse Lake. This is the lake which was syndicated at one time, but the syndicate faded away and both the Copse Lake and the Church Pool are now kept for fishing by invitation only. The 1¼-acre Copse Lake has produced a 60 and numerous 50s, all English fish obtained from a number of sources and grown on. I've heard the odd suggestion in the past that Kev has introduced imported fish into his waters, but he assured me that is not the case – and it has to be said that the fish I saw on the bank while I was there were very 'home'-looking.

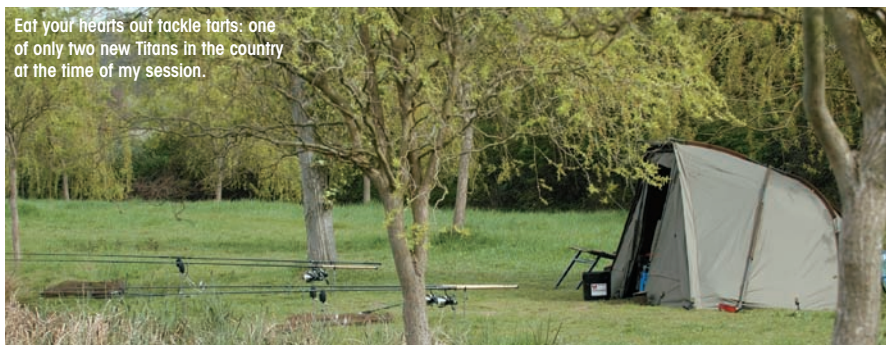


We walked up the slope to the Church Pool, so named because it is near a church! At 4¾ acres it is slightly smaller than Birch Grove, although it actually looks bigger, and because of the two islands in the lake I felt it fished bigger. I opted for a swim on the far bank, which gave access to the gap between the islands. Come the end of the session I was to regret the decision to fish a swim half a mile from the car park, but until I came to pack up (in the wind and rain) I had no call to regret the decision at all. From where I was bivvied up I could see little or no sign of civilisation, I had a big wild, natural wood at the back of the swim, and the Essex countryside stretched away into the distance at the right-hand (eastern) end of the lake.

The maturity of the trees and the lakes made me realise just how long it was since I'd been to Kev's. Mary and I were regular visitors back in the day, but since we lost Mary (and Kev and I had some kind of minor spat!) I hadn't been down. While I was away two lakes had been dug, weed introduced, in excess of 5,000 shrubs and bushes planted – and the lakes now looked as though they had always been there! All the lakes I know have taken on a new lease of life in the greenery stakes while I've been fishing them, but the transformation of bare fields into mature lakes at Kev's has been remarkable and a testament to the man's vision and creativity.

The fishing on the Copse and the Church pools is by invitation so I was well aware that I was in a privileged position. If I felt a bit out of my depth fishing a strange water in the hotbed of carp fishing, that was balanced out by the fact that it was early season and the fish would not be feeling unduly pressured. The chill easterly wind that blew for three days suggested that they might not be feeding, either, but living on the bank in beautiful surroundings for a few days is one of the joys of carp fishing for me, and I was there to work, anyway! Fishing-wise I felt I was on a wing and a prayer. I'm sure readers can relate to the feeling that everyone else knows what they are doing while they don't. Well that was how I felt at Kev's. You find the spots, put it out there in what you think is a format that will produce action, then sweat it out until the fish give some sign that you are on the right track. It's one thing

Eat your hearts out tackle tarts: one of only two new Titans in the country at the time of my session.



I was there to work! Putting the interview and the features on tape with Kev.

thinking you should catch, but quite another turning that into a fish on the bank. Small-water fish have an inbuilt instinct for danger, and when they are off the feed anyway, persuading them to pick up a hookbait isn't always easy.

Right, eat your hearts out, tackle tarts: I was to spend the six days and nights of the session in one of the two new Titans that were in the country at that time, and, come the end of the session, I could take it home with me! So Alan not only took the strain by barrowing two loads of my gear round to the swim, but also erected the new Titan to ensure that it looked right. It not only looked right, but felt right, and spacious, and although we had alternate nights of heavy dews and rain there was no sign whatever of condensation – a failing of some of the earlier versions of the Titan. I've been using Titans for as long as I can remember – certainly since the first prototype hit the banks – and the latest version is as easy to erect and dismantle as its predecessors, and definitely has the edge in terms

of space and a number of other features.

Kev was busy through Monday and Tuesday so the taping would have to be done on Wednesday, and Friday. In fact the Tuesday was Kev's 55th birthday and he was to be wined and dined by his attractive partner Bev. Bev seems to have mellowed Kev. He has more humour than I recall him having way back and seemed very at ease with life. I think he feels that he has now got the hang of business and life, which is a mellowing and relaxing combination. Long may it continue.

Thursday was out of the work schedule because Kev was focusing on trying to catch a big fish from the Copse Lake off the top for the latest Nash DVD. This is the natural sequel to the excellent *In Pursuit* which came out about five years ago, and Kev was keen to get the new film finished so the compilation and editing could be completed in time for the late-spring and summer carp market. The easterly wind and the myriad of water fowl made filming surface fishing very difficult, but early Thursday afternoon a runner was sent round to tell me that Kev had just caught his fish off the top. I took the camera round in time to snap Kev with a huge grin on his face, and a big mirror in the landing net. It weighed 39lb 15oz and at the time I recall thinking how nice it would be to catch something even approaching that weight! The whole capture sequence had been caught on film and will appear in the new DVD, out soon folks! (I don't want this to read like a commercial because that isn't how it is intended, but this all happened while I was down there, which makes it part of my week in Nashville.) One of Kev's employees, Greg, was the



The fish was still in the landing net and Kev had a big grin on his face!



Still smiling... Kev with his 39lb 15oz floater-caught mirror.



42lb 8oz of stunning mirror carp.

Inset, below: My approach was attractor bait Snowman setups fished over freshly cooked hemp. The ever-present pressure cooker in action.



only other person fishing the Church Pool for the first few days of my stay. He was bivvied up in the southwest corner of the pool, which was where the fish were showing throughout my stay. Apparently that is a very weedy, deeper bay, and while the chill wind blew from the east that was where they preferred to be, with the odd wander round the pool at night. Greg had to pull off on Friday morning to put a Nash show together, and big-fish southern angler Jerry Hammond took his place. Fortunately I'd caught by that time so my early sense of uncertainty had eased, otherwise I would have been extremely nervous about Jerry's presence. Some of the guys you read regularly in our magazines catch big fish for fun, and Jerry is definitely one of those guys!

Because I'm writing a blow-by-blow day-by-day book on the bank this season I'll not give a detailed description of my session, just the bare bones of it. I started on Monday afternoon. Afternoon was the hot time, Kev assured me. By nightfall Tuesday nothing had happened to raise my confidence levels, and the fish were still flaunting themselves in the weedy bay on the far side of the pool. Midnight on Tuesday the

"Prior to fishing Kev's Church Pool my English personal best was Scaley from the Mangrove at 38½lb"

new ACE buzzers finally sprang into life and I landed a heavily-scaled low-30. Thank heaven! I'd got a fish for the chapter in the book. Now, according to the rules I'd been sent, all fish had to be photographed immediately, with the captor standing in the water, which was why my chest waders were hanging in the weeping willow behind the Titan. I had been given Greg's mobile number for just such an eventuality as this, and I rang him. No answer. Mmmm. I set off round towards his bivvy, and then thought better of it. We'd been introduced earlier and he had a

rather gorgeous-looking Essex girl with him and I didn't want to make myself unpopular if their relationship was proving stronger than platonic. I settled for photographing the fish on the unhooking mat. I released it, then went back to sleep, wondering why I had done that. What if it was the only fish I caught for the chapter in the book?

The following night Greg

caught a fish. I waited for the flashes to light the night sky but they didn't materialise. 'Must have put it straight back,' I thought, then went back to sleep. In fact they photographed the fish at 8.00 next morning – on the bank! Rules? What rules? I discovered later that Kev had no knowledge of a rule about fish going straight back and being photographed in the water! If I caught another one I was to give him a ring and he would sort it out. I caught another one at 11.30 that night (Thursday) and rang him. He suggested that I put it in a sack and they'd take the pictures in the morning. I was relieved about that because it was a rather special-looking fish, and weighed 42lb 8oz. It's the one on the cover.

Prior to fishing Kev's Church Pool my English personal best was Scaley from the Mangrove at 38½lb. The fact that it was such a gorgeous fish, and was caught with four other Mangrove fish on the winter's night of 19th December (1994) has meant that I've never really been busting a gut to catch something bigger just for the sake of it being bigger – if you understand that. But this fish was not only bigger, but equally beautiful. And if the circumstances of the capture





weren't as taxing as catching from the far side of the Mangrove in the depths of winter, I'd fished to catch something, and had got extremely lucky in terms of what I'd caught. Kev thinks it may be the biggest fully-scaled in England. He suggested I ring Paddy Webb at Carp-Talk, whom Kev looks on as the greatest living authority on English carp. I don't know why I bothered because it was dismissed by the Carp-Talk pedants as not being fully-scaled anyway!

There was another reason for me never having been particularly anxious to break the 40lb weight. Scaley and Emma the Fully-Scaled apart, I still feel that my two best results weight-wise were a brace of 30s from Waveney D Lake in 1983, and a 30 and big 20 brace from Darenth Tip Lake (then a circuit water) the following year. When we were compiling the captures list for A Century of Carp Fishing my two Waveney fish were in the top 20 biggest carp from the country that year! These were both results from waters that were heavily pressured by some of the best anglers in the land at the time, and from venues a long way from home. So while I'm understandably delighted to have caught my first English 40, catching a fish of that size from home waters has never been a Holy Grail. I think I was more taken by the beauty of the fish than its size, although I guess it is nice to have a 40 (two actually, he says enigmatically) on my CV. As Kev said when he caught his floater fish, "I like fish that weigh 39lb 15oz!"

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Out of deference to Kev I used his baits while I fished there, and was inevitably highly impressed by them. They have an awesome reputation and don't need my endorsement to remind the carp world how effective they are. One of the fish fell to iC-1 (I See One) with an Amber Strawberry pop-up pellet on top, while the other three fell to iC-1 plus the ever-reliable Pineapple pop-up on top. I like to get a bait going and catch them on what I'm feeding them, but the diving tufties made it clear that there wasn't a great deal of solid feeding going on (there was plenty of bait lying around), so I settled for trying to provoke a hookbait pick-up over hemp, cooked on the bank and introduced whilst fresh. The bright yellow Pineapple and the white Amber Strawberry are strong attractors and very in-yer-face visually, and they keep on producing, which makes them as attractive to me as they are to the carp!

I think I should add that I used Kev's Nash Fang Twisters for my fishing in Essex, and have continued to do so at Birch. I was four out of four at Kev's, and have been five out of five at Birch, using barbless hooks. This pattern is available in barbless, micro barbed, and barbed and if you are struggling to land fish then I can wholeheartedly recommend these hooks. I would prefer a slightly longer shank for the 360 Rig but as I didn't fish that setup at Kev's, or at



Saturday afternoon brought sunshine, and a second fish for Jerry. I nipped round to shoot the filming and take some trophy shots. From memory it weighed 40lb 10oz (inset, below).

Birch, I was happy with the presentation the Twisters gave me, fished Knotless Knot-style on Kryston's stiffish Super Mantis, which I love to bits and use everywhere I fish.

When the photo team arrived on Friday morning they were accompanied by Jerry Hammond – who was there to fish as part of a DVD he's making – and his cameraman Kev (not Nash...). Jerry wielded my camera, a couple of others from the Nash camp clicked away, and in addition the lovely fish was filmed. The conditions weren't great for photography. There was a brilliant early morning sun slanting across at a low angle, conditions which necessitate flash and always make everything too sharp (I can feel a deluge of letters flooding in putting me right on that point!) but I'd got a gorgeous fish for the chapter, and a new personal best, and could relax and enjoy the rest of the week. I anticipated that at least some of it would be spent watching the prolific Jerry catch fish for the camera, and I wasn't far wrong.

I caught four fish in all, and photographed two of Jerry's three 40s. Kev and I got our taping done: the features will appear in due course, as will the chapter for the book, as will Jerry's DVD. Come to think of it, Thursday onwards was a bit of a media circus, really, although it just felt like a carp session at the time! In fact it was a thoroughly enjoyable and rewarding week, until Sunday morning. Now by some strange juxtaposition of fate over the final weekend Alan was putting the Nash gear through its paces in a tackle shop in Shrewsbury, and on Saturday night he fished Berth Pool, all of five minutes from Birch Grove! So my helpmate from the start of the session was 200 miles away when I came to pack up. My last entry for the chapter on the session made some flippant remark along the lines of 'No pain, no gain': three round trips of half a mile each way later in the pouring rain and stiffening cold easterly wind had me reflecting ruefully on my flippancy, aching, wringing wet, and well ready to point the motor in the direction of home.

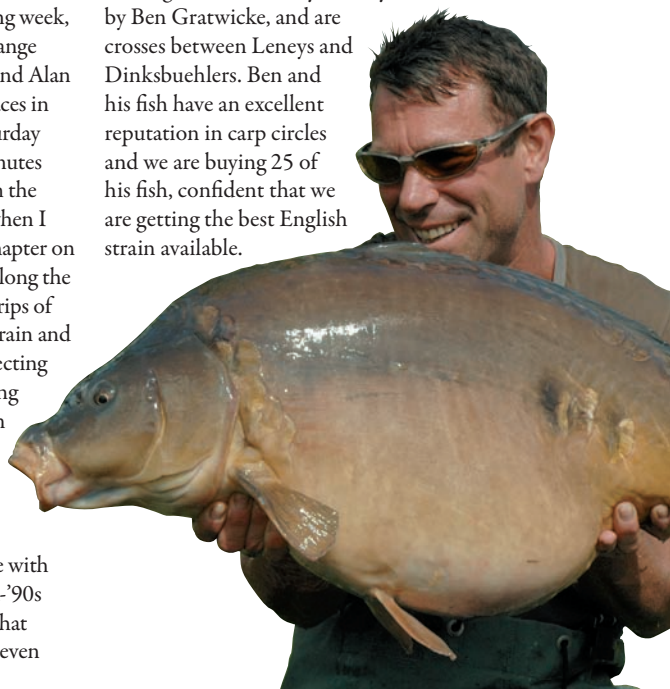
But discomfort of that sort is very temporary and a couple of miles down the road I was warming up, drying out, and reflecting on my time on Kev's estate with a smile on my face. His vision of the mid-'90s has become a reality, and I would guess that what he has created may well be beyond even

his expectations when he started on the project. And this is just a taster really. You can read all about Kev, his life and his lakes in the next three issues of Carpworld.

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May is work-party time on the Mangrove and Birch Grove for me. This year the work has had to be crammed into two weekends, because I've had a bonus trip to Rainbow dropped into my lap for the last week in May and first in June. It's an ill wind... Tom Duncan-Dunlop's mate Justin is getting married this year and can't make the trip, so I've been called in as a replacement. Sometimes a man's just got to do what a man's got to do...

Work parties this year have included otter-proofing stock ponds, which is unmitigated hard work. As time goes by it is becoming clear that the Leneys in the Mangrove and Birch Grove are unlikely to produce a 40lb+ fish so we're going to try to strengthen the strain through the introduction of new fish. However good the new fish are, we can't risk introducing them straight into one of the meres, or into the breeding pond, so we are going to mix 10 of the existing fish with 10 new strain fish in a stock pond to ensure that they are, in fact, compatible. The fish are coming from the Priory Fishery in Devon, run by Ben Gratwicke, and are crosses between Leneys and Dinksbuehlers. Ben and his fish have an excellent reputation in carp circles and we are buying 25 of his fish, confident that we are getting the best English strain available.





Work-party time in Shropshire: members of the syndicate preparing the stock ponds for offer fencing at the Mangrove.



Meanwhile Ellis Brazier and Alan Young were doing some serious tree-clearing from the margins of Birch.



If the mixing works out we will be able to introduce the new fish to the breeding pond and thereafter have a new strain of carp coming through for the future.

The 50 new fish we put into Birch are settling in well and some are making an appearance on the bank. I spent the overnights of the working parties fishing Birch and had five fish in all, including what we think may be a sixth different 30lb+ common. Consensus is that there may be as many as 10 different 30s in Birch now, and it is certainly returning to its former glory. As the Birch carp can be notoriously difficult to catch, we are hoping that the latest introduction of fish will create some competition for food and make all the fish a tad more catchable. The fish certainly showed a distinct liking for Mainline's Mark One bait during the second weekend I was there, when I had fish of 32lb 4oz, 29lb and 19lb. I've added Nash Amber Attract Strawberry pop-ups to my Snowman repertoire and the common fell to the Mark One and Amber Strawberry combination. The other two fell to Mark One Snowmen with no brightly-coloured pop-up on top, which suggested they were actually starting to feed on bait at last.

The mixing of the two strains of fish is an exciting project and I'll keep you posted on results as the years go by (God willing). I think that fishing in Essex and seeing five 40s on the bank during my six days down there brought it home to me that if you want to catch bigger carp then you have to fish for them. For the last 10 years or so most of my serious fishing has been overseas, but I am a member of Ashmead and will get at least one session in down there before I close the pages of the book and put it into production for the autumn publication date. Latest working title for the book is More From the Bivvy (original, huh?) or Ramblings of a Bivvy Rat, although it may finish up with a different title altogether!

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Fishing and work parties apart I have a new string to my bow in that I am part of the committee of the Predation Action

Group, a group of worthies who are anxious about the future of angling and are intent on doing something about the predation that is endangering our fish stocks. As I'm press officer and at the time of writing we aren't quite in a position to

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issue our first press release I'll not jump the gun and give further details of the project. It will be getting a great deal of publicity in the months ahead and if there is some way in which you think you can help in terms of reporting predation or giving much-needed financial support, then please get in touch with the group via the avenues detailed in the pending press release. More on this next time around.

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So the world has turned green, the carp are starting to feed more strongly, and I'm off to Rainbow to share the Island Swim for two weeks with my mate Tom Duncan-Dunlop, an experience I am quite looking forward to. I was

vaguely hopeful of catching my first 40 during the compiling of the book, which happened at Kev's. And while the book is really to get across what fishing carp sessions in all sorts of conditions is like, the other hoped-for fish for the book are a 60lb+ mirror from Rainbow, and my second 70. As I may have mentioned on and off in the past, Rainbow beats me up on a regular basis, so I'm not holding my breath in terms of achieving either of those big-fish ambitions, but I'll be out there, trying, and recording my frustrations as I go along. There is a buzz to fishing Rainbow. It's like no other venue in terms of stretching your nerves to the limit, and letting you down with a bump when it doesn't come right for you. I don't know how others find it, but I am always outside my comfort zone when fishing Rainbow, and I have no doubt that in that sense the coming fortnight will be no different to my previous trips. Tom seems to know what he's doing there, which will help, and at least I won't have to push a barrow for three miles at the end of the session! The island is accessed by boat.

Have a good season, be patient, believe, and catch a few. See you next time. **TP**



A typical Birch 23lb common caught from literally under the rod tip outside the lodge on a work party overnighter.

Inset, above: Friends and family gathering for a social at Birch to celebrate the approach of a new season of visitors.

