# Family’s six-year canal boat renovation destroyed in suspected mistaken identity arson



A family of five has been left devastated and effectively homeless after their houseboat, docked in Hackney Wick, east London, was set ablaze in what is believed to be a case of mistaken identity. Tess, 35, and her husband Akin, 33, have spent six years transforming their 60ft boat, named October in honour of their eldest child’s birth month, from a bare shell into a sustainable and comfortable family home. The boat was equipped with solar panels, a water filtration system, and a roof garden flourishing with tomatoes, aubergines, cucumbers, strawberries, and potatoes.

The canal boat was more than a home to the couple; it was the place where their youngest children, aged four months and three years, were born and raised. But in the early hours of May 24, the family’s life changed forever when an unknown individual allegedly broke in and set the boat on fire. While Tess and the children were away camping and Akin was out with friends, fire crews battled the intense flames. The fire destroyed most of the interior that the family had lovingly refitted over the years, along with countless sentimental possessions such as a cherished teddy bear, family quilts, old jewellery, and personal music equipment.

The trauma deepened as the family now faces the uncertainty of whether they can return to their floating home. Emergency housing offers from Hackney Council were deemed unsuitable since they would require the family to relocate far from friends, school, and support networks. As a single-income family, a mortgage is out of reach, and restoring the boat to its former glory would be prohibitively expensive. Adding to the financial blow, the insurance payout will only cover the value of the boat as an empty vessel since the family had not reassessed its value after refurbishment.

The Metropolitan Police have suggested the incident may have been a "tit for tat" act of arson linked to mistaken identity, a distressing scenario that has left the family grappling with the potential end of their canal boat lifestyle. A 34-year-old man with no fixed address has been charged with arson with recklessness as to whether life was endangered and is due to appear at Wood Green Crown Court.

Friends and the local canal boating community have rallied around Tess and Akin, setting up a GoFundMe campaign to help cover essential needs such as clothing, food, emergency accommodation, and counselling, as well as assisting with rehousing and education continuity for the children. Despite this support, the family’s outlook remains uncertain. They face not only the loss of their home but also the daunting task of rebuilding their lives amid fears that toxic remnants inside the burned boat may make renovation impossible.

This harrowing case highlights broader concerns about safety and community resilience in Hackney, an area that has recently seen several significant fires and arson investigations. In the past year, multiple fires in Hackney—including residential and outbuilding fires—have required substantial emergency responses, some resulting in injuries and arrests. Notably, earlier incidents in the borough have involved severe arson linked to housing disputes and hate crime investigations, underscoring the complex challenges faced by local authorities and residents alike.

While the family focuses on healing and planning their next steps, their story is a poignant reminder of the vulnerability of unconventional homes and the impact of urban crime on tight-knit communities. The tireless efforts of friends and neighbours to support them reflect the strength of the canal boat community that Tess and Akin treasured.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-raise-funds-who-have-lost-our-home)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490), [[7]](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2025/may/boat-fire-homerton/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[3]](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2024/may/outbuilding-fire-hackney-wick/), [[4]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/hackney-arson-clapton-fire-newick-road-life-sentence-b1181274.html), [[5]](https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2024/march/house-fire-hackney/), [[6]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/hackney-clapton-fire-arrest-arson-b1146727.html)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-14821585/heartbroken-family-homeless-stranger-burnt-canal-boat.html?ns_mchannel=rss&ns_campaign=1490&ito=1490> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/help-raise-funds-who-have-lost-our-home> - A GoFundMe campaign has been launched to support a family who lost their houseboat in an arson attack in Hackney Wick, London. The funds aim to cover essential needs such as clothing, food, emergency accommodation, and counselling services. The family, including three children, is also seeking assistance with rehousing and ensuring their children can continue their education. Despite having insurance, the payout does not cover the full value of the boat or its contents, making community support crucial for their recovery.
3. <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2024/may/outbuilding-fire-hackney-wick/> - On 28 May 2024, a fire involving an outbuilding on White Post Lane in Hackney Wick was reported. Four fire engines and approximately 25 firefighters attended the scene, where half of a single-storey wooden hut used as a bar area was damaged by fire. A man was rescued and taken to hospital by London Ambulance Service crews. The fire was believed to have been caused by a charcoal heater igniting nearby combustible materials.
4. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/crime/hackney-arson-clapton-fire-newick-road-life-sentence-b1181274.html> - In September 2024, a man was sentenced to life imprisonment after setting fire to his Hackney flat, resulting in injuries to five people, including a passerby. Neighbours were forced to jump from windows to escape, and one family threw their baby down to waiting relatives during the blaze. The arsonist, Jacob Pitkin, pleaded guilty to multiple offences, including arson with intent to endanger life and possession of imitation firearms. The incident was linked to a housing dispute and antisemitic sentiments.
5. <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2024/march/house-fire-hackney/> - On 20 March 2024, a fire broke out at an end-of-terrace house on Newick Road in Hackney. Eight fire engines and around 60 firefighters attended the scene, where the ground and first floors of the three-storey house were destroyed. Three people left the building before the Brigade's arrival, and four were taken to hospital by London Ambulance Service crews. The cause of the fire was under investigation by the Brigade's Fire Investigation Team and the Metropolitan Police Service.
6. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/london/hackney-clapton-fire-arrest-arson-b1146727.html> - In March 2024, a man in his 60s was arrested on suspicion of arson after a fire destroyed a house in Hackney. Four people were taken to hospital following the blaze, which left the ground and first floors of the three-storey house on Newick Road destroyed. The Metropolitan Police stated that the man made threatening and allegedly antisemitic comments upon his arrest. The incident was being investigated as a potential hate crime, with no indication of terrorism involvement.
7. <https://www.london-fire.gov.uk/incidents/2025/may/boat-fire-homerton/> - On 24 May 2025, a fire occurred near Homerton Road in Homerton, involving a canal boat. Six fire engines and around 40 firefighters attended the scene, where most of the canal boat was damaged by fire. There were no reports of any injuries. A 25-metre cordon was established, and firefighters cooled two gas cylinders as a precaution. The cause of the fire was under investigation by the Brigade and Metropolitan Police.