

Coal trade narrowboat restoration work begins



TOOLEY'S BOATYARD

| Hardy was built in the 1940s and transported coal between Braunston and Banbury

Molly Pipe

BBC News

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A heritage narrowboat is being given a new lease of life after spending years under the canal.

Aptly-named Hardy was built in the 1940s and was originally used to transport coal between Braunston and Banbury.

The boat fell into private hands once the canal coal trade dried up and eventually sank after being abandoned.

Banbury boatyard Tooley's hauled the narrowboat to the surface in 2018, with a plan to restore it to its former glory. Progress was slowed due to the Covid-19 pandemic but restoration work has now begun.

Hardy was dry-docked in early April for emergency repairs and a survey was carried out to find out the scale of the project ahead.

"It does need a lot of work," said surveyor Darrell Broscomb, who is also a former Tooley's employee.

He estimated the restoration project could take up to 10 years to complete.



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| The boat spent years at the bottom of the canal before being rescued

"The boats were surplus to requirements [after the canal coal trade ceased] and a whole load of them were sunk in about the late 60s," said Brian Saunders, one of the many local volunteers involved in the project.

"There's still a load of them at the bottom of the canal, and the longer they stay there the more they rot."

Hardy was saved because of its links with Banbury, and was in a condition where it could be restored.



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| Jacob Beak is leading the restoration work

"The repairs that we're doing to Hardy at the moment are not essentially traditional, but they're emergency repairs to keep her floating," said Tooley's employee Jacob Beak, who is leading the project.

However, the team hopes to do most of the work using more traditional materials and techniques, including using oakum - loose fibre obtained by untwisting rope - pressed into the gaps of a boat's sides to make them watertight.

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