

The Latest News

Happy Birthday, Rolf Harris



CRIME FEATURED NEWS

By Alexander Baron

**88**
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Today Rolf Harris will be celebrating his 85th birthday. After a fashion. A short while ago he was a unique A List entertainer, adored in both his native Australia with which he had maintained strong ties, and his adoptive country, England, indeed the whole of the UK. All that ended in June last year when after days of deliberation a jury convicted him on all 12 counts of the sexual abuse of the young. Once ubiquitous, his website is now long gone, his honours rescinded, and even the town of his birth has done its best to erase him from both its present and its past. Rolf Harris has to date been the biggest scalp claimed by the witch-hunt known as *Operation Yewtree*, and is likely to remain so unless the same feeble brains that destroyed his legacy decide to use the same tactics **against Cliff Richard**. Decide? They've already tried, but to date public reaction has been hostile, and if they proceed too quickly, people may finally wake up to what is really going on here.

How did this madness begin? Witch-hunting is nothing new of course; the most famous names of antiquity attached to it are Salem, and the lesser known Pendle trials here in England. In the 1980s, there was the Satanic panic which erupted in the US and followed here, but the current

crop of witches don't practise impossible crimes, unless it is to molest children, teenage girls and grown women in plain sight so slyly that at the time no one but the victim is aware of what happened, and she comes forward only years or decades later, finally plucking up the courage to tell the world how she suffered and is still suffering, how this momentary encounter ruined her life, but now that she has justice she can move on. Of course, a little compensation would not be amiss.

If that sounds unnecessarily cynical, that is precisely what has been happening here. *Operation Yewtree* began after a documentary purporting to expose the crimes of the late Jimmy Savile was shown; its effects were electrifying. Savile shot to fame in 1964 as the first presenter of the BBC flagship programme *Top Of The Pops*. By that time he was nearly forty, but in the decades to come he became a familiar figure on our TV screens, and a force for good.

Savile did much to erase the stigma of mental illness, so-called, rubbing shoulders with the great and the good to improve facilities at the Broadmoor Special Hospital, and Stoke Mandeville where there is a special unit devoted to the rehabilitation of paraplegics; he raised money, raised awareness, and even starred in public safety advertisements that unquestionably saved lives. Who could forget the slogan "Clunk click every trip!" which was used in a road safety campaign?

After his death though, the eccentric Englishman with the mop of dyed blonde hair, was fair game for any calumny directed against him. Savile never married, and on account of this was once widely believed to be homosexual; now though he was accused of groping and even raping teenage girls by the score.

No one can deny the fact that the volume of evidence, or more properly the volume of claims against Savile is impressive, but the quality of them is sorely lacking. One allegation is that he groped a young woman in a hospital in 1954. If Savile ever went near a hospital in the 1950s it was probably to be treated for some minor ailment. Another report of an incident said to have happened in 1959 beggars belief. A woman who claims her own father molested her as a child says that he brought Savile into the hospital where she was to have a serious operation and allowed him to molest her too. Both these women are alluded to as victims, and at least one is clearly delusion.



Rolf Harris playing on accordion back in 2008 (Image Credits: Brian Minkoff- London Pixels)

Another Savile victim beggars belief for an entirely different reason. A former cancer patient who once wrote to thank him for helping save her life is one of those claiming against his estate. This woman has demanded £60,000 for the sexual abuse she claims to have suffered at his hands. Although not all the claims made against Savile are quite as ludicrous as these, most of them have little if any merit. Two bloggers have gone through the various Savile claims meticulously and demonstrated this. Moor Larkin runs the [Jim Cannot Fix This](#) website, while Susanne Cameron-Blackie who runs the [Anna Racoon](#) site brings a personal touch to her researches because she was once a pupil at Duncroft School which Savile was supposed to have used as his own personal harem.

There have also been one or two brave dissenting voices like [this woman](#), who worked with Savile for decades yet saw and heard nothing bad about the man she says she saw do only good. In the interview, the BBC journalist tries to convince her to badmouth Savile, but she refuses. Her suggestion that he be put on trial may sound novel, but that was what was done posthumously to Lee Harvey Oswald, and all he did was kill the President.

So how did Rolf Harris end up being tainted with the same brush as Jimmy Savile? The only tangible evidence against him came from his much younger mistress, one of two, apparently, the other being a woman – now deceased – who was not so young. According to her [impact statement](#) after his conviction “The attacks that happened have made me feel dirty, grubby and disgusting. The whole sordid saga has traumatised me. I have panic attacks and suffer from anxiety. The effects of the abuse have been with me for many years. I started drinking at the age of 14 to 15 years old. This was to block out the effects of what he was doing to me...This has had an effect on my relationship with my parents and people close to me. The slightest thing would upset me, I would get so angry, my reaction would be disproportionate and over the top. As a young girl I had

aspirations to have a career, settle down and have a family. However, as a direct result of his actions, this has never materialised. I have never had a meaningful relationship whilst sober. I have also never been able to hold down a job.”

This makes him sound like a monster, but her relationship with Harris came to light many years previously. He claimed the relationship started when she was 18, she when she was 13. A former friend of his daughter Bindi, this *victim* had travelled the world with Harris without complaint, carried on a covert on-off relationship with him for the first decade of her adult life, yet now she is traumatised, a wreck? If the jury can be forgiven for swallowing that, they cannot be forgiven for convicting him of the indecent assault on a young girl in 1969 or 1970, because there was no credible evidence that he had ever been at this small Portsmouth community centre. This was another “victim” who claimed Harris had ruined her life by touching her briefly. In common with the first “victim” and Tonya Lee, this woman clearly has serious mental health issues, but does she have them because of Harris, or did she accuse Harris of indecent assault because she is three sandwiches short of a picnic? Here is what is very likely the real explanation; Harris had appeared [with Jimmy Savile](#); he had also made a child safety video warning against what used to be called “stranger danger”. It is more likely that when *Operation Yewtree* was thrust onto the world, this so-called victim created false memories about Harris which became real, as [detailed here](#) last week.

The other attempts to blacken his character were disgusting and successful in equal measure. On top of that, Harris appears to have had incredibly poor legal representation considering how much his lawyers were paid. They even advised him to abandon his appeal against conviction.

Rolf Harris is far from the only person to have been ensnared by demented women and convicted of imaginary crimes. Other recent convictions for historical crimes that may well be unsafe are those of [Max Clifford](#), Ray Teret and Philip Pickett, while even the recent conviction of the odious Gary Glitter looks [at best dubious](#). Clifford is neither as charismatic nor as likeable as Rolf Harris, and few people will have any sympathy with him, but the evidence against him was just as unreliable, and the dirty tricks used to convict him were equally odious.

Ray Teret was convicted of almost certainly imaginary rapes dating back to the 1960s. Teret’s real crime is that he was an associate of Jimmy Savile, and in practice this is the nearest the authorities will ever get to a finding of fact against Savile.

The conviction of Philip Pickett for two rapes and two indecent assaults was likewise the result of the Savile allegations, although he was a music teacher, and was not part of the *Operation Yewtree* crop. The offences for which he was convicted date to 1978. It may be that he did come on to some of his female students when he was younger – there is contemporaneous evidence for this – but whether or not he did, and whether or not any of these relationships were consensual, non-consensual or imaginary, it is difficult to credit he carried out rapes in soundproof rooms at the Guildhall School of Music.

In the United States where there are statutes of limitations, the allegations against veteran comedian Bill Cosby are being used [to spearhead a campaign](#) to remove them. If Americans allow

this, they will give *carte blanche* for the same kind of demented women who destroyed Rolf Harris to destroy any man they choose.

If the allegations made against Harris, Clifford and others had not been sexual in nature, they would not have got anywhere near a courtroom; in the absence of special circumstances, there is no reason for allegations of sexual assault or rape to be treated any differently from ordinary offences against the person or indeed against property. Rolf Harris might like to mull over that as he celebrates his 85th birthday as a convicted child molester.

[Regarding Ray Teret, since the above article was published a BBC documentary series has disclosed the physical evidence found by the police during their investigation. Unlike the investigations (so-called) into Rolf Harris, the deceased Savile and others, this was not a trawl, and the evidence looks compelling. There have been attempts to link the evidence against Teret to Savile but the claim that Savile was a serial paedophile remains as tenuous as ever].

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88
SHARES