BarristerBlogger

Matthew Scott's Legal Comment Argument and Discussion. Comment Awards 2015 Best Independent Blog

Rolf Harris should have been given a retrial

I don't know whether Rolf Harris is in fact a serial sex offender and last week's judgment by the Court of Appeal leaves the matter in a thoroughly unsatisfactory state.

Before looking at the judgment in detail let's put a few misconceptions to bed.

First of all, it gives no support to those who suggest that Rolf Harris is the victim of some sort of police or CPS conspiracy. It would be quite extraordinary if there had been and there is no evidence of it. It is true that there was a failure in the disclosure process. Some very old, and as it turned out rather significant, convictions of an important witness were not disclosed at the trial. They were not disclosed because the police had not found them. That does not suggest a conspiracy, it suggests at most a lack of diligence in seeking out old records. Faults in disclosure are endemic in our creaking justice system. Even today, when criminal records are fully computerised mistakes in criminal records are far from unusual. The relevant records dated from the 1960s, long before computerisation, and were found by the police on microfiche after the trial and before the appeal. It is hardly likely that they would have done so had they been part of a conspiracy to suppress the truth.

There are other criticisms of the police which appear in the judgment, or are at least suggested by it; in particular a certain lack of enthusiasm in looking for exculpatory evidence, but there is certainly nothing to suggest a wilful attempt to stitch up an innocent man. That is not to excuse the police of all blame: a lack of diligence in a case as serious as this is a worrying matter, but it is a great deal less worrying than evidence of a conspiracy to pervert the course of justice.

Secondly, the judgment gives no support to some of the unpleasant and unfair comment that has circulated about the original prosecution counsel Sasha Wass QC. There is no criticism of her whatever in the judgment,

and no reason to think that she did anything other than a proper and professional job in prosecuting Mr Harris.

Thirdly, anyone searching the internet for information about the case may have come across the information that one of Harris's jurors was a member of the Metropolitan Police. That is true, but it is not something that featured in the appeal. Opinions differ on whether police officers (or for that matter lawyers and judges) should be able to sit on juries, but the law is clear: they are unless they have some close connection with the investigation. (For what it is worth I have changed my mind on this issue after representing a man at a trial at which the serving police officer (whom I had originally and unsuccessfully asked the judge to exclude) turned out to be the only member of the jury with the wit to notice that the foreman, confused by the judge's complicated "route to a verdict" direction, had accidentally returned a guilty verdict when they had in fact meant it to be not guilty).

The 12 charges of indecent assault against Mr Harris were based on the evidence of 4 different women. Evidence was also given of alleged criminal behaviour towards a further 5 women or girls which, because it took place abroad, could not form the basis of any charges in this country. The evidence of the 5 "extra-territorial" women was only summarised in the judgment and we have no way of knowing for sure whether the jury believed all or any of them, although given their unanimous verdicts of guilty of every count on the indictment it seems very likely that they were inclined to disbelieve anything Mr Harris said.

This was not one of those cases where there was an obvious dearth of evidence. There has been much justified criticism of Operation Yewtree and its various saplings, but faced with the evidence of 9 different women all making sexual allegations against Mr Harris it is very hard to see how the CPS could have done anything else but prosecute him. I have little doubt that if the CPS had been reckless enough to seek my advice it would have been to prosecute.

So far as most of the women were concerned there was no issue over identification or possible misunderstanding of innocent behaviour. Either the women were deluded or lying. And in fact there was more than the evidence of the women themselves: there was a letter of apology which proved at the very least that Mr Harris had had an affair of some sort with his daughter Bindi's friend which caused her "misery," although it was not an explicit confession of any crime.

So it was seemingly a strong case as these thing go, although there were still reasons to be cautious. Some of the allegations were only made to the police *after* the fact that Mr Harris was under suspicion had been made public. One of the main witnesses, Bindi's friend, had demanded money from Mr Harris and threatened to go the newspapers when he refused to pay; another had sold her story to the media for substantial sums of money. Not all the accounts were entirely consistent, there was a plausible possibility that some could have been made simply for financial gain, while one important witness suffered from various mental health conditions and had had treatment for years without mentioning Harris, although she had told her therapists

about abuse from another man. In short, it was a strong case on paper but still one on which everything depended on the credibility of the main witnesses, with not a great deal of corroborative evidence beyond the sheer number of complainants.

The indecent assault conviction that was quashed last week related to a witness, referred to in the judgment as "WR," although in fact her name has been widely publicised after she waived her right to anonymity following the conviction. Out of an abundance of caution I will stick with the Court of Appeal's identification of her as "WR".

She had alleged that in 1969, round about the time of the "first moon landings" (the first was in July 1969) and the release of Harris's sentimental smash hit *Two Little Boys* (the autumn of 1969), she was 7 or 8 years old and a regular visitor to the Leigh Park Community Centre, near Portsmouth.

Leigh Park Community Centre

On one occasion, she said, Harris had visited the Centre and sung on the stage. Afterwards he signed an autograph for her, and after doing so he (in the words of

the judgment) *"put his hand between her legs, touching her twice over her clothing. On the second occasion it was done forcefully and aggressively."* This was not the most serious offence of which he was convicted, although it did involve the youngest child. It also earned him 9 months out of his total sentence of 5 years and 9 months. According to WR (in a "Victim Impact Statement" which the jury did not hear):

"I have carried what Rolf Harris did to me for most of my life, it took away my childhood, it affected every aspect of my life from the point he assaulted me. Something that he did to me for fun that caused me physical and mental pain for his own pleasure and then probably forgot about as quickly as he did it, has had a catastrophic effect on me….."

Following his conviction she brought, or threatened to bring, a civil action against Harris, which was settled when the disgraced antipodean crooner paid her £22,000, she having previously declined offers of £12,500 and £18,000. She told the Daily Mirror:

"I'll never again be afraid of the dark or see the twisted image of two-faced Harris in my nightmares."

Mr Harris's case was that he had not been to Leigh Park before 1978, and that WR was therefore either mistaken or lying.

Last week's Appeal Court judgment does not go so far as to say that WR was lying but it sets out the lengths to which both police and defence teams went to find corroboration both before and after his conviction.

Nobody else claims to have seen the actual incident taking place, so efforts concentrated on establishing whether Harris had performed at Leigh Park during, or even close to, the relevant time. Leigh Park is and was, to put it mildly, something of a backwater on the international celebrity circuit, so it might have been expected that any visit from him would have created quite a stir. At the trial various members of WR's family remembered her visiting the community centre on a regular basis but none could recall a visit from Harris. Police officers trawled through local newspapers for the years 1967 – 74 but there was no report of him ever having visited. They conducted house to house inquiries and issued an appeal for witnesses who had attended the Leigh Park Community Centre between 1968 and 1972.

In the end the police efforts produced just two witnesses: a Mr Wilbourne who said rather vaguely that he had heard that Harris had "visited the area in the late 1960s," and a long time resident of Leigh Park, David James, who confidently remembered Harris visiting the Community Centre, although he put the year as 1967 rather than 1969. He said that he could date it accurately because he had been home on leave after a long period on duty in Korea. As Lord Justice Treacy drily noted:

"*That might have been thought to be somewhat odd since the Korean War took place in the early 1950s.*"

According to Mr James, Harris had opened a nearby shop (as a visiting celebrity rather than as a shopkeeper) and was then invited to the community centre. James said he had met him there and thought he had obtained his autograph for his children.

By the time of the appeal further evidence had been found by the defence to cast more doubt on whether Harris had in fact been to Leigh Park at the relevant time. Most importantly, Mr James's evidence had been effectively destroyed. He had never been to Korea as a serviceman, as he had claimed. The closest he had come was a spell in the Territorial Army, but he had never been posted anywhere abroad, let alone to Korea. In fact, it was surprising that he had been accepted by the TA, because as a young man he had done National Service in the RAF for a mere 10 days before being discharged for "unsatisfactory performance." Far from serving his country in Korea, he had spent the 1960s acquiring convictions for petty dishonesty in the United Kingdom. These convictions – old and trivial in themselves, but significant in the light of his evidence that he was on service in Korea – were not disclosed, as they should have been, to Mr Harris's defence team. They were not uncovered by the police until earlier this year.

The upshot of all this is that Mr James, a crucial supporting witness, appears to have been at best a fantasist, and at worst a liar.

Rather unusually, before the appeal against the 2014 convictions was heard, the fresh evidence about Leigh Park was ventilated in Harris's separate trials for sexually assaulting teenage girls, heard at Southwark Crown Court earlier this year. Faced with the unavoidable fact that the jury would know about his convictions, his defence took the bold approach of arguing that notwithstanding the jury's verdicts he was in fact innocent of the offences for which he had received the prison sentence. After two "hung" juries the

prosecution eventually threw in the towel on the second trial and Harris was formally found Not Guilty last May.

At the recent appeal the prosecution conceded – it was unarguable really – that Mr James's evidence had been seriously undermined, but still tried to uphold the Leigh Park conviction. The Court of Appeal, in restrained judicial language, was having none of it:

"this operates to weaken the Crown's case on the important issue of whether Rolf Harris ever attended the Community Centre in 1969 to the extent that we cannot view the conviction on Count 1 as safe."

Where did this finding leave the other 11 convictions?

On the face of it, perhaps very much as they were. WR was seemingly unconnected with the other complainants. Most of the evidence in the trial had had nothing to do with her, or with Leigh Park or with the fantastic imaginings of Mr James. That, indeed, was the view of the Court of Appeal, which concluded:

"*The subtraction of a single allegation does not in our view have significant impact where there was abundant remaining evidence.*"

The result was that Harris was refused leave to appeal on the remaining 11 counts.

His argument was that the jury had been told by the judge that WR's evidence could be used to support the other allegations; in other words, if the jury were sure that WR was truthful and accurate, they could use that fact in helping to decide his guilt on the other

allegations. If they followed that direction, part of the evidence used to convict Mr Harris on the other counts could have been the false assumption that he was guilty of sexually assaulting a seven or eight year old girl in Leigh Park.

Of course we don't *know* whether the jury reached their verdicts in that way. It was the first count on the indictment, it was the first alleged assault to have occurred, and it involved the allegation against the youngest alleged victim. What is more, unlike some of the other witnesses WR had not, before the trial sullied her hands with demands for money; she might for that reason have seemed a more reliable and "independent" witness than some of the others. That indeed was how she was presented by the Prosecution. Ms Wass asked her in re-examination what she had to gain by lying. Her answer was:

"Nothing to gain whatsoever except for closure on the incident that happened to me."

On the other hand, hers was by no means the central allegation in the case, and it is perfectly possible, perhaps even likely, that the jury first considered the evidence on the other counts and then, having decided he was guilty of those, denied him the benefit of the doubt on the Leigh Park allegations.

As juries never give reasons for their verdicts we have no way of knowing for sure. The Court of Appeal however, seemed quite content that the jury's incorrect assessment of WR's evidence could not have affected its assessment of the rest of the witnesses. It is a curious and inconsistent piece of reasoning, given that the jury

had been told in terms by the trial judge that they *could* use their findings on the Leigh Park allegation to do just that.

It is possible that the jury's discussion could have gone something like this:

"Right, let's look at this count by count. That's as good a way as any other.

Count 1 – she's not in it for the money, unlike some perhaps. She just wants closure. Why would she lie? She seemed pretty convincing and, what's more, that Mr James was an impressive witness. Ex military man, independent witness, no reason to lie. And what about Rolf? Can't really trust him over two impeccable witnesses like them can we?

OK, so we're all sure he's guilty of Count 1?

Right. Now let's look at Count 2. Who should we believe the woman or the paedophile? …"

What we do know is that Harris's trial, as with the vast majority of allegations of historic sex abuse, depended heavily on the view that the jury took of the credibility of the complainants, with limited corroboration beyond the sheer number of witnesses. It did not depend on inferences to be drawn from circumstantial evidence (unless the sheer number of complainants is itself treated as a "circumstance"), still less on scientific evidence pointing towards his guilt. It boiled down to the simple question: "are we sure the complainants are

telling the truth?" and (the other side of the same question) "are we sure that Mr Harris is lying?"

At least as far as the Leigh Park allegation is concerned the overwhelming weight of the evidence now is that Mr Harris not only was not guilty, but *could not* have been guilty.

We have a serious problem here. The jury system, indeed much of the legal system, is based on the – I was going to say "premise" but I think I'll go instead with "comforting hooey," that jurors (and judges and magistrates too) are able safely to determine who is telling the truth merely by looking and listening. Juries are assumed to be shrewd enough to pick up on an inconsistency here, a suspicious evasion there, a significant mistake somewhere else; they are even entitled, if they like, to take into account the "demeanour" of a witness, whatever that may be ("he looked thoroughly shifty .. her tears looked genuine"). In a multi-complainant case, the assumption is, they can stir up all the allegations to reach a safe conclusion: they are asked to return separate verdicts on each count, but are often entitled, as here, to consider the evidence from one complainant as supporting that of others.

Don't worry about liars and fantasists, the British (or strictly English and Welsh) justice system is the best in the world and if you're not telling the truth the jury will find you out.

Assuming that juries are generally able to sniff out a liar is a comforting myth, but even if it is true the fact is that this particular jury wasn't much good at it. It was

bamboozled by the evidence of WR and David James. Moreover, the standard of proof being what it is, we can say that the jury was not just inclined to believe them; it must have been *"sure"* that the pair were accurate. They may well have been fantasists or mistaken rather than liars, but the fact is that every member of the jury swallowed their untrue evidence without reservation. However good juries might generally be at teasing out fact from fiction, it is inescapable that this particular jury proved itself unable to do just that, at least on this part of the case.

Just as importantly, the jury must also have decided that when Harris said in evidence that he had never been to Leigh Park during the relevant years he was lying, even though we now know that he was telling the truth. One of the critical points in the trial related to another complainant who accused him of an assault in Cambridge. Mr Harris said he had never been to Cambridge but late in the trial footage emerged proving conclusively that he had been. He said that this was a simple mistake, the prosecution said it was a lie. In deciding whether it was a lie or a mistake the jury could have been expected to take into account the fact that he had similarly claimed not to have gone to Leigh Park, despite the existence of witnesses who said that he had. It is not hard to see how the Leigh Park evidence could have cemented the jury's view of him as a liar. This is how one exchange from Harris's cross-examination was reported by the Daily Telegraph:

Ms Wass said that while Harris claimed his alleged victims were all making up their claims, the new evidence of the film showed that he had lied.

She said: "That film footage which has come to light very late in the day… will demonstrate that it is not these victims who have lied, it's you who have lied. And you hoped to get away with that lie when it came to (the alleged victim who claimed she was assaulted in Cambridge)."

Harris said: " I didn't realise it was a lie, I had no recollection of being in Cambridge until I saw that video."

Ms Wass said Harris "can't have failed to know" that he was in Cambridge and told the entertainer: "The footage shows that you have lied during this case as you have lied about every other victim."

The jury agreed with Ms Wass: they were sure he had lied about Leigh Park – he had not.

The Court of Appeal has historically had a lamentable record of reversing miscarriages of justice. Here is Lord Chief Justice Goddard upholding the conviction of poor, innocent Timothy Evans (1950) 34 Cr. App. R. 72:

"*In our opinion the appellant was properly convicted, there is no ground for interfering with the conviction, and the appeal is dismissed."*

Just over 2 weeks later Evans went to the gallows. That had been a case where the jury could have been forgiven for not spotting that the chief prosecution witness was one of the nastiest serial killers of the century, but they also failed to spot that he was a liar.

Derek Bentley suffered the same fate. Croom-Johnson J. dismissed his appeal against conviction for murder with these words:

"In our opinion this is nothing more than an ordinary appeal in a murder trial, an ordinary appeal which is, in our judgment, without foundation and which is accordingly dismissed."

It was no comfort to him, and little to his surviving relatives that the Court of Appeal decided 46 years later that in fact he had had an unfair trial even by the standards of his time, and that his appeal should have succeeded.

The Birmingham 6, bullied and tortured into confessions, appealed against their convictions to be told by Lord Widgery, that they had suffered "no ill treatment beyond the normal," and then, after a second appeal, by Lord Lane that *"the longer this hearing has gone on, the more convinced this court has become that the verdict of the jury was correct."*

Their attempt to sue the police for assault got nowhere when Lord Denning head of the Civil Division of the Court of Appeal, stopped it, on the grounds that if they succeeded it would open up:

"such an appalling vista that every sensible person in the land would say: It cannot be right that these actions should go any further."

The innocent Guildford 4 and the Maguire 7 all suffered similar treatment in the Court of Appeal with

applications for leave to appeal being confidently rejected.

And it is not of course just "high profile" cases that have suffered this treatment over the years. I defy any reasonable person to read Jon Robins's powerful book about the relatively unknown case of Tony Stock, convicted of a brutal Leeds robbery, and to say with confidence that the Court of Appeal was right repeatedly to refuse his appeals.

All too often over the years the Court of Appeal has been reluctant to quash convictions where reasonable doubt exists, seemingly terrified by the appalling vista that to admit that juries make mistakes will undermine the whole justice system. It sometimes seems, even now, that the Court sees its role as upholding convictions wherever possible, when it should be its job to scrutinise them with the utmost care.

There are many flaws in our jury system, not least (as this case vividly demonstrates) that juries do not give reasons for their verdicts. I still support it because I fear that any alternative would be even worse. But if a jury system is to produce justice it is essential that it is supervised by a Court of Appeal that is willing to correct the risk of injustice where it is staring them in the face.

Justice is always going to be elusive in some cases. Sometimes it may simply be impossible to be sure where the truth lies. Perhaps a system in which verdicts are handed down with no explanation and no reasons is no longer one that we should accept.

But accepting that that it is the system we have, Rolf Harris should be given a retrial. He may well be guilty. A case which looked strong on paper remains strong; but a strong-looking case is not the same as an unanswerable one. Of course a retrial would be another ordeal for the complainants. Of course finality in litigation is something to be sought, as long as it can be reconciled with justice. Unfortunately at present the only thing that anyone can properly be sure about is that his jury got it catastrophically wrong on Count 1. There is no rational reason to be satisfied that it got the rest of the verdicts right.

Author: Matthew

I have been a barrister for over 25 years, specialising in crime. You may also have come across some of my articles I have written on legal issues for The Times, Standpoint, Daily Telegraph or Criminal Law & Justice Weekly

---

47 thoughts on “Rolf Harris should have been given a retrial”

Patrick Graham

November 19, 2017 at 2:17 pm

useful piece and a good read, Thanks.
I would add that proportionately the major problem in law is still the twin arms of injustice peculiar to this sexual offence legislation and practice.

1) “believe the accuser” – the police have adopted a policy of believing the accuser’s first accusation then failing to investigate the credibility of the named suspect in any way other than so as to support the degree with which they believe the accuser. All positive factors that might suggest alibi, lack of motive/behaviour, total non involvement with the accuser, are ignored, not investigated.
This is classic fixed idea policing gone very sour in a system when one can be convicted on one accuser’s testimony alone…

2) statute of limitations – having spoken with many women who were sexually assaulted as children (and having been so assaulted myself) I haven't come across any who support the unlimited nature of time limitations as it currently stands. I would suggest 4 years is easily enough to cover any such offence and might just allow the innocent as well as the guilty to rest easier in their beds… – better 100 guilty go free than 1,000 innocent lives are ruined.

(Thanks to the massive boom in rape and historic child abuse allegations being made, currently between 5,000 and 22,000 innocent lives per year are being ruined, just in the UK)

 **H**

February 6, 2019 at 10:58 pm

A 4 year statute of limitations "easily" enough to cover the sexual abuse of a young child? That's less time than you'd get to claim for rent arrears.

To say a 7 or 8 year old must gather the steel to report by age 11/12 or forever hold their silence is expecting more of them than many adults manage. Abuse can take years to process; with kids there's the added problem that the abusers are often in a position of authority or even guardianship over the child, and employing coercive techniques to ensure silence. There are some arguments for not allowing reporting indefinitely but 4 years is an absurdity.

 **John**

February 11, 2020 at 3:01 pm

Since poor Rolf is again in the news. I quote the smug author:

"But accepting that that it is the system we have, Rolf Harris should be given a retrial. He may well be guilty. A case which looked strong on paper remains strong"

I disagree. He may well be innocent. I don't think the case "looks strong on paper", but it certainly "looks strong" in the papers!

One issue which is rarely raised is the fact that the UK has a population of around 65,000,000 persons. Of those, I wonder how many might be prepared to point fingers at an innocent man for money? I wonder how many of them might be delusional fantasists? (Mental illness – regrettably – is not rare.) More than the number that "came forward" to accuse Mr Harris, I am sure of that.

That – what – less than 20 women “came forward” might – perversely – be a sign of Rolf’s good character. I wonder how many people respond to those “no win no fee” accident claim lawyers? A lot more than 20 is my guess.

People are dishonest. This is a fundamental characteristic of humanity. And if you want to accuse me of cynicism then I would counter you. How is accusing an elderly man of serious sex crimes anything less than deeply cynical?

I have ALWAYS believed Rolf Harris to be innocent. Nothing. Nothing will shake that firm belief.

1.  **Paul**

   May 30, 2023 at 10:24 pm

   I totally agree Rolf was a very sensitive
   caring man you could see this in the animal programs he presented. Definitely not the predator he was made out to be. The women that accused him all scored in one way or another be it fame or fortune . One thing for sure I believe the justice system stitched up an innocent man shame on them all

   Reply

2.  **Tim**says:

   November 19, 2017 at 2:34 pm

   If I were Rolf Harris, I wouldn’t be too happy that my fate had been sealed by a random group of 12 anonymous and unaccountable people who, between them, had proven unable to identify the decade in which the Korean War had taken place. That said, I wouldn’t be best pleased with my lawyers who evidently did not google it before the trial.

1.  **Misty**

   November 23, 2017 at 4:07 pm

   Judge Sweeney, who presided over the Rolf Harris trial, had previously acknowledged that a jury (in the Vicky Pryce trial) were not quite up to scratch. From the BBC news:

   “The judge said some of the questions from the jury had shown a “fundamental deficit in understanding” of its role. // Mr Justice Sweeney was speaking after a list of 10 questions was sent to him by the jury on Tuesday as its deliberations continued

at Southwark Crown Court. // Speaking in court later on the same day in the jury's absence, the judge said: "In 30 years of criminal trials I have never come across this at this stage, never." // He also criticised the jury's lack of understanding of the trial process."

https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-21516473

The obvious question here is why twelve people selected at random should all be expected to have an understanding of the trial process. It might not be PC to say it, but some people are not particularly bright.

Also, I think it is fair to point out, for those who might be unaware, that Rolf Harris had a new defence team for the second and third trials.

1.  **Bridget**

May 29, 2023 at 5:21 pm

The only thing he was guilty of, was he had an affair with a young woman ,who tried to blackmail him. I would never have believed, that in this day and age a man could be found guilty and sent to prison with zero evidence. This poor man had his life and good name destroyed by people of dubious character, and unfortunately the whole legal system supported them. RIP rolf.

 **Rabbitaway**

November 19, 2017 at 2:39 pm

'Of course a retrial would be another ordeal for the complainants' ! Indeed it would. It would be an even greater 'ordeal' for an 87 year old man, especially if he is innocent. Well done Matthew

 **Alexander Baron**

November 19, 2017 at 2:52 pm

You're far too kind to Wass, she and the police knew these allegations were a total crock. Harris was an A List entertainer; the lies about him were trawled from fantasists and head cases around the world.

He was already a big star in 1969, and if he had been anywhere near Leigh Park there would have been a paper trail a mile wide. There was not one document, not one. The Cliff Richard case shows these dolts know exactly what they are doing, trying to provoke accusers so as to corroborate by volume.

These historical cases are a farce; they have to be stopped.

As for Timothy Evans, he was guilty. I've researched the actual papers, and Jonathan Oates has researched a magnificent biography of Christie. Also worthy of note is the book by John Eddowes.

 **rabbitaway**

November 19, 2017 at 3:57 pm

Timothy Evans was 'guilty' of what ? My recall of the latest version, was that he hadn't killed his wife, but had been involved in the killing of his daughter ! BTW, you're just as bad as anyone else, declaring someone guilty just because you read a few books. Even if Evans had have had some involvement in his daughter's death, he should not, in my opinion, have been hanged. Just an opinion mind. As for Derek Bentley, OMG, I'm not going there ! Truly one of the most shameful days in British Justice !

Reply

2.  **Alexander Baron**

November 19, 2017 at 5:43 pm

Like I said, I've studied the actual papers. Once you allow for the coincidence of two murderers living under the same roof, there is not much to be said for the innocence of Evans. Here is a detailed argument. Jonathan Oates says Christie was not a necrophiliac but that's about all: https://www.digitaljournal.com/article/350656

 **Margaret Jervis**

November 19, 2017 at 3:50 pm

Brilliant critique Matthew. Ironically the CoA even referred to the Cambridge 'lie' in support of their flawed decision:
"We note that in relation to GP, evidence emerged of an alleged lie told by Mr Harris…"
going only to expose further its tendency to seek to uphold convictions rather than measured scrutiny and rational application.

 **Bandini**

November 20, 2017 at 2:57 pm

I haven't really followed the Rolf Harris case in any great detail though was surprised to note that one of the Cambridge accusers – "Karen Gardner, a woman from Wiltshire whose written evidence formed part of the prosecution case in the [2014] trial of entertainer Rolf Harris" and who "told the BBC how she was assaulted by the star in 1977 [1978] in Cambridge" – popped up again in later trials:

"The musician and artist had also been accused of twice groping a third teenage girl after he was paid £100 to appear on ITV celebrity show Star Games in 1978, and telling her she was "a little bit irresistible"."

Harris was found not guilty.

Gardner "waived her right to anonymity" and so it is we know that she's a downtrodden, voiceless BBC journalist who suggests that Harris was but one of multiple alleged offenders she encountered:
"And I could name a lot of them – but he was the worst because he was Rolf Harris."

Speaking after the first trial: "I didn't expect him to be found guilty. And all twelve counts. It was a vindication of all the women who've given evidence."

Now that there is a little less 'vindication' I'd love to hear why the CPS decided to return to prosecute Harris for an allegation they'd only previously used as supporting evidence to back up the other claims. What was in 2014 reported as a touched breast (over clothing, in front of a crowd) seems to have evolved a little, at least as reported by Cabridge News:

"The woman told the 87-year-old entertainer's indecent assault trial that he twice grabbed her breast and told her she was "a little bit irresistible" during a recording of Star Games in 1978, before running his hand between her upper legs in a taxi."

Although Gardner says she had the full support of her immediate family there were "family rifts" and a cousin who "chose to decide that I had made it up and tried to get himself involved in the court case". Crikey.

I'm somewhat reminded of the case of DLT and how, when the CPS were initally unable to obtain a conviction, they returned for another pop – this time adding a new complainant: the downtrodden, voiceless comedian & some-time BBC employee; in the end her's was the only charge on which the jury felt able to convict DLT, the 'victim impact statement' later being nominated for the Bailey's Women's Prize For Fiction. Er, or maybe I made that bit up – must be catching.

https://www.bbc.com/news/av/entertainment-arts-28156387/victim-rolf-harris-touched-me-indecently
https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b08sks6y
https://www.cambridge-news.co.uk/news/uk-world-news/cambridge-rolf-harris-court-trial-13048667

 **James**

November 19, 2017 at 3:51 pm

So, because he couldn't remember being in Cambridge 40+ years ago , and evidence is then produced to prove he was, makes him a liar? I can't remember where I was 40 years ago, either, that's ridiculous. I still don't believe in Rolf Harris' guilt. Never have done.

2.  **Andy Meon**

November 20, 2017 at 12:03 pm

All the video evidence proved beyond reasonable doubt was that he was in Cambridge. It doesn't prove beyond reasonable doubt that he committed a sexual offence.

 **Lizzie Cornish**

November 21, 2017 at 12:34 pm

Exactly. Of course, the woman was never proven to have been at either venue, for her story changed almost entirely, save for the allegation itself. She became 3 yrs older, in a different park in Cambridge, in a different year, in a different programme too. The trial was not stopped so that this new 'story' could be investigated.

More details about this allegation….with videos of her (back to camera) below in the 'comments' here:

https://www.facebook.com/SupportJusticeForRolfHarris/photos/a.151903465832876 6.1073741836.1503049216593977/1535267280038837/?type=3&theater

Please note: The police and CPS, despite CHARGING Rolf with this allegation, it being during 'It's A Celebrity Knockout' KNEW that Rolf had NEVER been there! The BBC sent them the entire programme, you see, which they watched. They STILL charged Rolf though! HOW were they allowed to do this? Sasha Wass (excuse me whilst I try not to spit!) told the court that there was the possibility that Rolf had

turned up AFTER the programme (WHAT?!!!) to try to help raise funds for charity. She explained there was no internet back then, thus it was hard to know. (Again, WHAT?!!!)

ALL she had to do was contact the BBC and ask “Were there any other similar programmes on TV at that time?” And the BBC would have come back saying “Oh, yes, there was only one, called ‘Star Games’ ” wouldn’t they? Yet, apparently, NO-ONE did this, not even the defence either. I’d just like to commend Rolf’s current lawyer, Stephen Vullo and his excellent team, including William Merritt, the private investigator who worked with Stephen on this, and William’s team too. How I so WISH they’ve been the original team in Trial One, but, we are where we are.

1.  **Misty**

November 23, 2017 at 2:07 pm

At 84 – when memory is not necessarily what it used to be – Rolf Harris was crucified because he had forgotten that he had been to Cambridge thirty-six years earlier. The accuser had forgotten how old she was when the alleged incident took place, the year, the name of the programme and the location.

At the end of the day, the allegation was minor: ‘rubbing her buttocks’, over clothing and in a public place. There was NO evidence at all that it ever happened – nor even that she had attended Star Games, held on Jesus Green. Yes, Rolf Harris did appear on Star Games (for which there is irrefutable evidence) but there is no evidence to suggest that she did. She claimed that she had been at It’s A Knockout, which had been held around three years earlier.

If someone was so traumatised by a rubbing of their buttocks over clothing (for which there was no evidence) one might think that they would have remembered whether they were at Parker’s Piece (in the city centre with no swimming pool) or at Jesus Green, on the outskirts of Cambridge, which has a large swimming pool which was used by Rolf Harris during the filming.

3.  **dearieme**

November 19, 2017 at 4:18 pm

The fuss about child abuse four or five decades ago reminds me of the satanic abuse accusations of twenty or thirty years ago, in the sense that much of it is presumably sheer fantasy.

The particular Harris case of which you write so well is a disgrace: he-said/she-said, and no evidence worth tuppence that he’d ever been in the neighbourhood. Only a

bloody fool could convict for that. Similarly, nine different accusers matter little once (a) the whole thing has been publicised, and (b) there's a whiff of money in the air.

The argument against a statute of limitations is that it would be redundant because juries will be sensible. That argument now looks very weak. And yet it would be desirable to allow trial for crimes in the distant past if good new evidence turns up e.g. scientific evidence.

It's a tricky one, isn't it?

4.  **dearieme**

November 19, 2017 at 4:21 pm

"The innocent Guildford 4 and the Maguire 7 …": an Irish acquaintance mocked the idea of the innocence of one of those groups (I can't remember which). Their release was, he said, evidence that the British were becoming hopelessly soft in the head.

If comforted him, I think, that it was still The British who were in the wrong.

5.  **Julie Healy**

November 19, 2017 at 7:06 pm

Well written Matthew. If one charge/conviction against Rolf Harris, has been squashed- then of the other charges need to be looked at as well. We all know that the establishment will resist a retrial as it could uncover that the whole trial/conviction was unsafe in the first place. Questions would also be asked about the role of the CPS . There has to be a re-balance of the justice system in these situations. Many innocent people are being wrongly convicted, as this case shows – because the original allegations are not investigated properly in the first place. The mantra of "you will believed" is no basis in law. This is the reason that the police are still resisting the recommendations of the Henriques Report. Get as many convictions as you can to hit govt targets – and the politicians will be happy .

6.  **Harry**

November 19, 2017 at 7:32 pm

The approach to historic allegations of abuse swings between 'believe nobody' to 'believe everybody' and back to 'believe nobody again'. Taking/supporting these emotional responses to abuse is harmful to alleged perpetrators and victims alike. I'm not even sure, anymore, that the courts re the right place to resolve these issues. In my experience, all public hearings do, is make abusers entrench their positions

(often reinforced by ‘experts’ on their side) and make victims feel disempowered and revictimised. There has got to be a better way to resolve sexual crimes/allegations…..

1.  **uk.gov.chaos**

   November 21, 2017 at 7:24 am

   Well said H, my thoughts exactly. A victim does not necessarily want the perp jailed for 5 years. That just want their to be an agency were they can report their concerns as a warning to others, hopefully to stop more victims.

7.  **Jon**

   November 20, 2017 at 1:46 am

   An interesting and valuable article, marred only by the quotation from Lord Denning about the “appalling vista”. He was not, of course, saying that the appalling vista was that if you admit that juries make mistakes it will undermine the whole justice system. That’s a widespread misconception. He was saying that if, after being convicted, you are allowed to pursue a civil lawsuit that undermines the safety of the conviction the appalling vista will be that convictions will be rendered unsafe by the verdict of a civil judge and thus, the correct route to pursue is a criminal appeal.

   Should Harris be entitled to a re-trial merely because one verdict was unsafe? I can see the force of that argument. Perhaps it deserves to be aired in the Supreme Court.

8.  **Randall**

   November 21, 2017 at 2:27 pm

   I’d just like to point something out about the Cambridge allegation, that isn’t mentioned anywhere above. The video footage produced purportedly as a gotcha does indeed show Rolf Harris in Cambridge. He’s taking part in a different show, on a different channel, in a different area of Cambridge from what was alledged. Oh, and it was 3 years later too. The accuser and prosecution didn’t seem to account for that. Instead, they seemed simply to rely on the fact that he had been to Cambridge when he said he didn’t think he had. No attempt to reconcile the completely different elements of video with the accusation. I believe the technical legal term for this is “bollocks.”

   Apart from that, we have the daughter’s friend who only went to the police (via the NSPCC) after failing to extort money from Mr Harris. Not much more to say about that. Then there’s Tonya Lee, who’s account of being groped under a table while sitting on Rolf’s knee in front of a whole group who saw nothing, cannot possibly be true. She’s heavily tainted by financial motives too, from magazine deals in Australia.

Like the Cambridge accuser, she also changed her tune but in less dramatic fashion, claiming to have lost weight over the course of her trip to England as a result of this fictional groping. When it was demonstrated that the dates showed that it would have happened at the end of the trip, she dropped this embellishment like a hot potato.

The current prosecution logic goes that one allegation can corroborate another. That's actually a howling fallacy but anyway, if that is a method of reasoning suggested to the jury, and then one allegation turns out to be untrue, then this NECESSARILY undermines how the other verdicts were derived. Somewhat surprising that fine legal minds don't understand this: or perhaps they do but there are other, political considerations involved.

9.  **Jonathan King**

November 21, 2017 at 6:50 pm

I think this "you will be believed" attitude should be expanded, not retracted – it would make policing so much easier. "Did you kill this person?". "No". "OK you can go".

1.  **Sue formerly of gojam's theneedle blog**s

November 22, 2017 at 1:28 am

Concur. This would free up more police time to trot around harassing people and raiding their houses at dawn on behalf of journalists who want to break stories about rapes and abuse by household names which never happened

Barrister Sarah Phillimore twitter rants continue to accuse and convict people of the most heinous crimes, pausing only to diagnose their mental health when they challenge her. Overriding the decisions of judges and senior police officers on public fora is considered brave and fearless by the obsessive criminal misfits who goad her into making ever more outlandish accusations. Whoever insures [edited] Phillimore for carrying out these activities in public areas must have some balls. *Waves and smiles to Sarah Phillimore's insurers.*

10.  **Sue formerly of gojam's theneedle blog**

November 22, 2017 at 12:04 am

Brilliant, Matthew. Those talking out of their hats should refer to your article often in the coming months, before making rash judgements and committing their own words to print.

Before germalists such as Watts, Poulton and co went scouting for fantasists, consummate liars and mentally ill individuals to use as weapons in achieving political objectives, complaints of rape and child abuse from decades ago were rare. Not all complainants given a new confidence through social media made their statements on twitter. Most complainants went to the police, and did not ask the population of twitter to assist them in finding others to corroborate their stories.

The names of their abusers were not endlessly tweeted and retweeted amongst disparate individuals who are vulnerable, gullible and easily led by those with too much time on their hands, over active imaginations, and socio-political ambitions, who dangle carrots for the most attention-seeking. Genuine cases are thankfully proceeding normally, without the fuss of social media and MSN and without the 'support' of the most vocal on twitter and an accompanying barrister playing on a harp with broken strings.

Some of those who have complained the loudest through social media and MSM of rape and abuse, are seemingly unable to accept recent CPS decisions, so have asked for reviews of cases, and are now jumping on every other bandwagon going on social media to keep their names in prominence. This is leading people to ask whether they are genuine complainants of child abuse, or merely seeking any old platform to gain public acclaim for anything at all which involves abuse, misery and destitution.

Quite why barrister Sarah Phillimore began her associations with some of the most unsavoury characters to ever land on twitter, has been a matter of much concern for some considerable time. Every vindictive comment she makes towards Barbara Hewson, Simon Just and Darren Laverty is based on false information [edited].

Sarah Phillimore cannot continue burying her head in the sand and pretending she has no knowledge of this. She regularly engages with a convicted duck on twitter who is currently threatening Mr. Just and Darren Laverty. How does she manage to ignore this and lol along with the duck for months on end? [Edited]

Sarah Phillimore does not bat an eye at this, for reasons known only to herself and her recently discovered inner kitten cat. (Which is an improvement on her inner bitch, which I find grating and unladylike at the best of times. Oops. There I go being a tad sexist towards her, and taking the liberty of identifying her gender without actually knowing if she identifies as female. Even though it has become obvious she ain't no lady.)

If one were to be generous to Sarah Phillimore, one could have said 18 months ago she was groomed and coerced by the same individuals who tried to use Darren Laverty. However, this excuse for a defence would no longer stand up in court, as barrister Barbara Hewson and MajorLeak2017 have regularly demonstrated sufficient evidence directly to Sarah Phillimore, who chooses to dismiss it all, due to her having diagnosed Barbara Hewson as having serous mental health issues, and stating that Simon Just and Darren Laverty are dangerous criminals who have been 'let off' by the police and judiciary.

When all the evidence is finally disclosed, and Sarah Phillimore sees the extent of police manipulation by [X's] troll team of gang-stalkers, and how police actively colluded with them at every stage of reporting, Sarah Phillimore will understand why people have repeatedly warned her to stfu and learn something about what she is involving herself in. People know where all the bodies are buried in [X's] case, and every body will be dug up to prove to every one of her and her gang's victims, that justice will prevail no matter what the cost to the health and well being of those victims in the short term. No matter how hard police the police would wish to continue harassing, threatening and maligning those victims to keep quiet.

The genuinely abused who have been further abused by [X's] gang, and further still by the police who colluded with her and her gang of trolls, will not have suffered in vain at the hands of this dangerous, self-confessed obsessive and the other obsessive misfits she surrounds herself with.

Police in several areas of Britain were presented with witness statements and evidence which would have prevented every false warrant and false arrest made since 2013. The police cannot continue covering this up, as the London Met are currently finding out. Several other police divisions are equally culpable for going along with the London Met's ridiculous plans – which are documented in emails, texts etc., along with other extensive statements and evidence submitted to themselves, lawyers and other agencies in bids to prevent the Met's plans being put into action.

Police and other agencies were warned in advance every time [X's] henchmen were preparing to telephone them, and police were told the name of who would be making the call, and told word for word what would be said during the telephone call. Police were given this information in order to assist themselves and other police divisions from further colluding with [X] and her gang.

Sarah Phillimore's current agenda of finding "remedies against social media harassment" should start with an appraisal of those misfits with whom she colludes. Although she has herself made many [edited] allegations to the police, it is suspected she is clueless as to how many dozens of other telephone calls were made to police to make false allegations with regard to the same innocent people who have been abused for five years by her acolytes. Sarah Phillimore is only one individual standing in a line of many who have deliberately set out to [edited]. The gravitas of her job alone has undoubtedly validated her trolls and their agenda here and there, but what does she get in return? Apart from retweets and nonsensical retorts to her verbal diarrhoea, on account of her most ardent followers not having a bloody clue what she is talking about unless she uses the most base language.

Perhaps Sarah Phillimore will consider returning the money donated to her 'cause' before she ends up in court. Ideally before the fork-lift trucks start arriving with pallets of disclosures for the CPS, regarding [edited] those with whom she has chosen to consort, [edited] It would be in her own interests, unless she has many blushes to spare. We have seen it all before of course. How those who become entrenched [edited], see no way out, so shout even louder and carry on [edited].

Her regular condemnations of innocent men on twitter will look far more unpleasant when printed on A4 in large letters for a Judge and jury. Criminal courts still tend to use juries in these situations, and her spiteful twitter trials where she has played Judge will not endear her to a jury. And despite her banter and comedy routines with Poulton's henchman Haydon and the duck, she is not Ken Dodd. Her light hearted banter will not win any jury over.

There was a time when Sarah Phillimore may have benefited from reading about Michael Shrimpton. Another barrister who wandered into the maze of troll territory and got burned. Shrimpton was given a ball of string and sword, but he forgot to tie the string to the door of the labyrinth. He found that once you sit down to dine with the Minotaur, there is no going back…

1.  **Matthew**

November 22, 2017 at 10:21 am

I am afraid I have had to edit your comments rather severely, something which I do not like doing. It is only of tangential relevance to the post (which is fine) but there are limits to the extent to which this blog is going to be used to continue a personal feud.

11.  **Baffled observer**

November 22, 2017 at 11:13 am

Thank you for this excellent blog. It is very interesting. It is quite baffling how the Portsmouth accuser got into court, and it's hard to understand how Tonya Lee managed it either. How can someone who has been paid for their story be permitted to repeat it in court? How can there be so many points in common (around 20 by my count, when comparing the transcripts published on the Support Justice for Rolf Harris Facebook page) between Tonya Lee's story, as told in her pre-trial 2013 TV interview, and Caroline Robinson's story about Jimmy Savile, told to This Morning and uploaded to YouTube six months before Tonya's story was published? What are the chances of the second story being true in those circumstances? Why did Tonya's allegations (groped on lap + groped outside toilets after Rolf Harris allegedly waited outside) mirror the only allegations by the main accuser (groped on lap + groped outside shower after RH allegedly waited outside) which Tonya could feasibly allege?

12.  **Jon**

November 22, 2017 at 6:44 pm

What a lot of ill-informed comments there have been here. A pity that an excellent legal blog cannot be confined to a readership of lawyers. There are plenty of people

who regard the decision of the Court of Appeal as equivalent to a declaration that Rolf has been the victim of lying, deceitful complainants and dishonest lawyers. They believe in Rolf's innocence, so they eagerly embrace this decision as confirming their belief that one liar has been caught out and with a bit more effort all the other liars will be caught out and shamed.

The CA did not say that WR is a liar or a fantasist. Her evidence may or may not be accurate and now the conviction based on her complaint has been set aside because of the dodgy, possibly dishonest evidence of David James, deceased, a man over whom she had no control. You have said that the jury was "bamboozled" by her evidence but that's an inappropriate word, connoting some sort of trickery or dishonesty. There are many possible scenarios that would be consistent with her telling the truth. A different date or location. Maybe that wouldn't convince a jury beyond reasonable doubt. But she, too, should be entitled to a re-trial of her complaint. The callous blackening of her reputation is unwarranted and it disgusts me that the public always tends to blame the complainant when there has been a cock-up perpetrated by the lawyers. I don't care whether Rolf is guilty or innocent of all the charges on which he has been convicted. I'd like to see complainants treated with consideration and respect unless it is demonstrated that they have been knowingly untruthful. The fact that there is no public record of Rolf visiting Leigh Park falls far short of proving anything of the sort.

1.  **Baffled observer**

   November 23, 2017 at 11:40 am

   Saying that her evidence may or not be accurate is rather like giving the benefit of the doubt to a 3-year-old found standing next to a smashed vase, who says when asked "Did you do this?", "No, it was Tinky Winky the Tellytubby". After all, who's to say Tinky Winky wasn't in the house when you weren't looking? Rolf Harris was a major star in 1969 with his own weekly TV show. He performed at venues such as the Royal Albert Hall and comparable venues abroad. The idea that he not only took time out of this schedule to appear at a local community centre but also that this appearance went unrecorded by the council, unreported by the local press, unremembered by locals including the police next door is patently absurd, as is the idea that someone claiming to have an assault seared onto their memory that destroyed their life would remember the wrong time, location or event. There's no need for a law degree when common sense will do.

2.  **Bandini**

   November 23, 2017 at 2:01 pm

   "I remember as a child his eyes were very cold. I felt that again during the trial. It's almost as if he's saying 'you're never going to get to me, you're never going to stop me'. I almost felt like I was in the cell with him, serving time with him. The pain I felt, it was terrible."

Cold eyes, hairy hands, crock of shite.
I suggest anyone reluctant to believe that sometimes people just make up these stories need only dig beneath the surface of those Savile claimants whose incredible tales have been shown to be impossible & therefore untrue. (There are rather a large number of them so you'll need some time –
and possibly a bucket by your side as you come to learn that the media feeding us these stories was often complicit in the salacious fabrications and has yet to be held accountable in any way whatsoever.)

I can see why people are upset at the overturning of this particular verdict as it was the one conviction which would have justified the 'paedophile' tag Harris is now saddled with. (If, that is, the word was used correctly and not simply bandied around to refer to any criminal conduct with a person under the age of consent, the thoroughly dishonest and fraudulent Mark Williams-Thomas a perfect example of the latter when he ejaculated with joy & relief on Twitter as a verdict was returned: "Guilty, she was 15 – so that means he's a paedo!" or some such idiocy).

I'm sure the above will fall on wilfully deaf ears given this:

" I don't care whether Rolf is guilty or innocent of all the charges on which he has been convicted."

Some people DO care, and about absolutely all convictions; if even a single one of them was wrongly returned then it shames the system and will leave lives in tatters in its wake. The 'celebrity' accused at least have people paying attention to their plight, God alone knows how many non-entities find themselves alone, up against the state, crushed. Sometimes they are lucky:

https://www.yorkpress.co.uk/news/15677477.Woman_jailed_for_staging_break_in_and_framing_her_neighbour/

3.  **Misty**

November 23, 2017 at 3:52 pm

Please be aware that there are people who know far more about this case than you do.

'Callous blackening of her reputation' indeed.

4.  **Margaret Jervis**

November 24, 2017 at 10:36 pm

Whether or not only ‘lawyers’ are qualified to comment on cases, you have got the wrong end of the stick. The issue is not whether the complainants lied, but Rolf Harris. That was the point relied on by the prosecution re his not remembering being in Cambridge at any time. So it was an adverse inference against the defendant implying he’d lied about not being in Portsmouth and also therefore re his entire defence. Matthew points out that there is clear evidence, supported by the Court of Appeal that he did not lie about not being in Portsmouth. And that the cross admissibility of evidence would have meant that the jury’s false belief as to this could have have tainted their belief re his evidence re other cases including the Cambridge alleged ‘lie’. It went to the heart of his credibility. Now we know there is no evidence of his lying about Portsmouth but that witnesses for the prosecution did. The Cambridge ‘lie’ was of course question begging since it was inconsistent with the evidence on the count in question in time and place (and of course could have been a memory lapse given a lifetime of endless travel) – it was just a general ‘blackening’ of the credibility of a ‘national treasure’. Exposing the fact of the Portsmouth prosecution deception, on the other hand, was a telling index marker of the prosecution case reliability in general.

5.  **Bridget**

May 29, 2023 at 5:38 pm

As far as I’m concerned rolf Harris conviction on zero evidence, from accusers who told the greatest load of falsehoods, has got to be one of the most serious cases of injustice, EVER,this poor mans life and good name were ruined . It’s mind boggling what the whole system did to him with not one shared of evidence.

13.  **Sue formerly of gojam's theneedle blog**

November 24, 2017 at 5:45 pm

Please accept my apology, Matthew. Would wish to assure you I am not posting due to personal feuds, but as someone who finds it nauseating to see police still allowing evil to flourish by not arresting and charging the very people who repeatedly conspire to falsely accuse others of csa crimes or having mental illnesses, thereby endangering livelihoods and lives. My post was a rather clumsy attempt to comment on those still Hell bent on destroying the very people able to assist the police and IICSA in investigations into historical child abuse, that the system of reporting any such abuse, and the manner in which it is dealt with by police in future, will prevent ‘evidence’ from being sprayed all over social media, to further attract other false claimants and vulnerables who have mental health problem and/or are easily led by germalists and the police themselves.

None of us know the true extent of the damage caused, and still being caused, to selected victims of malicious complaints to date. However, it is known all current participating police divisions in one particular germalist's case, are fully aware of her organised group of individuals who co-ordinate attacks on selected victims. Statements and bundles of evidence have long been provided to police in regard to all known culprits. Some of whom police already knew to have convictions for stalking and violence etc. Yet police chose to re-victimise and harass those victims instead of investigating and arresting the perpetrators.

I learned this week the BSB should best prepare itself for a deluge of complaints regarding barrister Barbara Hewson. One reason being because earlier this year she was prepared to be a witness for someone whom a germalist and her troll team repeatedly falsely accuse of being a gang-stalker and rapist, in order to prevent him from participating at the core of the IICSA.

Until the law is used to its fullest extent to prosecute those who conspire to harm by making false allegations against innocents and those who support them, the casualties will continue losing their livelihoods and possibly their lives. Bijan Ebrahimi, Rolf Harris and Carl Sergeant being only a few who have been who have been failed because of poor police investigations from the outset, or because of bumbling, mostly untrained police officers without clear guidelines regarding how best to proceed investigating household names when complaints of rape and csa are initially made.

The quickest way to obtain compensation, have someone removed from their home, fired from work, or to scare someone off the internet, is to accuse them of sexual harassment, sexual abuse, or allege they are paedophiles or associates of paedophiles. Malicious individuals are using this to the max on a daily basis, and it will not stop until police step up to the plate and do the job they are paid to do. And thoroughly investigate the complainant and their complaints before battering down the doors of innocents and their families in dawn raids.

The violent extent to which some germalists will go to destroy those who merely ask that they report the truth on historical CSA, is clearly demonstrated here: https://tompride.wordpress.com/2013/05/12/this-is-what-you-get-when-you-dare-to-question-a-tabloid-journalist-in-the-uk/

Enough lives and livelihoods have already been destroyed or lost. How many more people have to suffer this humiliation before the major culprits in MSM and social media are prevented from inciting violence and making death threats to innocents who have spent five years reporting their dangerous behaviour to the police?

14.  **Andy Meons**

December 8, 2017 at 10:43 am

Matthew, I was wondering whether you only cover cases in England & Wales. Not particularly related to Rolf Harris, but on a related subject, there's a fascinating case in Australia: that of Ben McCormack, who was recently convicted of child pornography offences in a case that stretches the definition of child pornography to an unprecedented limit.

15.  **Ronnie O'Toole**

December 13, 2017 at 2:33 pm

I find two elements of this case interesting regarding the use of multiple allegations to support a conviction:

> The cases were so different. The achilles heel of the sexual predator is their tastes are consistent. Surely the allegation made against him by the youngest accuser should have little relevance in deciding his guilt on the most dissimilar of the other cases?
> Rolf Harris, or any entertainer, will come into contact with far more people than I will (I am a private individual). He must have come into contact with (at a conservative guess) 50,000 children at public events over his life, which assumes 1,000 children per year. If we assume that 1% of the population are damaged or cynical enough to take advantage of someone famous who they could make some money out of, then an innocent man might face 500 allegations of abuse (a tsunami!) that are entirely fictional. On the other hand if I (private citizen) have faced 500 allegations, then given that I may have only been in contact with 1,000 children in my life makes these allegations far more likely to be true.

As you may have guessed I'm a statistician rather than a lawyer, and I find this man's conviction disturbing.

1.  **Mr B J Mann**

December 19, 2017 at 4:16 pm

This point is even more relevant in the case os Savilen who didn't just meet thousands of children, but did so in hospitals, where he spent much of his time wheeling them into pre-op preparation and out of recovery rooms.

In other words his face would have been one of the last seen as they went under anaesthetic and one of the first as they came round.

As I have pointed out here before: apparently half of people anaesthetised experience hallucinations that are so realistic they can't differentiate them from reality.

And in half o those cases the hallucinations aare of a sexual nature!

Given that, are there more, or fewer, accusations than would be expected if he were innocent?!

16.  **Sue formerly of gojam's theneedle blog**

December 15, 2017 at 6:02 pm

The case of Liam Allan is shining a light into one of the abysses of chaos where devious police are consistently being seen to further abuse those whom they know to be falsely accused. Police who undermine British justice by manipulating agencies and the CPS to suit their own warped, desired outcomes, are quite simply destroying our democracy, the lives of innocents, and those who support or would wish to defend them in court.

Police officers such as this have no place in policing or in general society, and should pay for perverting justice with their own liberty. The sentence Liam Allan may have been forced to serve, does not bear thinking about. How long would he have been incarcerated before an appeal? For this, heads should roll all the way to the Tower of London. Only those who have been incarcerated, or who have waited with them on appeal, would understand the despair of innocents imprisoned on the say so of liars and fraudsters.

Darren Laverty's case was flung from court when disclosures began to demonstrate the wickedness of police officers who had not only failed to do the job they are paid to do and swore on oath to do, but also damningly showed police to be in pursuit of some warped desire to incarcerate innocent people whom they knew to be innocent. Lawyers are considering some police officers on Laverty's case may have been 'star-struck', and foolishly led into believing Darren Laverty's case would be used throughout MSM, thereby being somewhat of a highlight in their police careers. However, this could surely not explain why nigh on 200 police officers who have been brought into this case by Sonia Poulton and her satellite gangs of willing henchmen, have quite deliberately allowed dozens of false allegations to be made against the true victims of crimes in this shocking case. Disclosure in Laverty's case has clearly demonstrated police failed at every stage of the process to act in accordance with the oath they once swore. It is most evident from the wording and tones of police from all over Britain, that they were not anticipating their 'private' conversations, telephone calls, and emails, being read by Darren Laverty…

Due to disclosure, it was noted London Met police officers had not only deliberately withheld evidence in Darren Laverty's case from the CPS, but were also in regularly contact with other police divisions whom they knew to have threatened, harassed

and otherwise abused the defence witnesses for Darren Laverty. The London Met were fully aware defence witnesses were threatened by police in person; by telephone; by email, and in other correspondence. Police categorically declared in writing they had no intention of accepting any witness evidence, and repeatedly refused to take statements in regard to Darren Laverty and others. Lawyers now hold much evidence of police, CPS and other agencies utilised by several police officers, to further enforce threats made to those prepared to be witnesses for the defence.

Quite why Darren Laverty and those who support him have been subjected to such vendettas by psychopaths, sociopaths and police, is a matter which will begin to change the way crime is reported, recorded and investigated in future. One notes Suffolk Police were recently advised they need more training in some of the most basic areas of policing, and should begin reintroduce investigative briefings. One would suggest this be extended to all police divisions, to prevent rogue police officers running around the country arresting innocent people for sport.

What a wicked web indeed…

https://trollexposure.wordpress.com/2017/12/15/the-non-disclosure-christmas-witchhunt/

17.  **Captain Sensible**

January 2, 2018 at 5:52 pm

I posted a similar comment on another blog, so apologies if you have read something similar. I work in business and we have the “bowling pin” concept. This means if you hit your first target, its then much easier to hit targets 2, 3 , 4 etc. This seems to be what happened to Harris. The prosecution has used the first hit to knock over all the others. Human reaction is shaped by initial thoughts and ideas, and the fact that Harris is now proven not to be at the community centre, should make all of the other convictions unsafe. A retrial would be the best route where the “dodgy” evidence and conviction cannot be used. However Matthew is correct the CoA don’t want to rock the boat usually as its “the system” and they knew juries can be unpredictable. What angers me is Inspector Knacker and how they get away with sloppiness all the time. Just in the last two weeks we have seen rape trials collapse because Knacker of the Yard have not done the most rudimentary checks. For the system to work and actual justice done, there needs to be a rethink on the current guilty until proved innocent, as this is the root cause of everything.

 **Nick**

February 7, 2019 at 8:45 am

Surely the elephant in this room is that the Harris trial took place in the context of post Savile hysteria about celebrity sexual assault and a torrent of false allegations

(most notably against Savile himself). Of course juries are likely to be influenced by that kind of collective insanity. Harris may have been guilty of one or more of the charges – we will never know for certain – but it amazed me that the jury was able to find him so on such questionable evidence. On Cambridge, for example, Harris was shown to have been there 3 years after the alleged assault, not at the actual time. His explanation of why he might have forgotten the later visit seemed entirely reasonable to me, and was supported by Sue Cook, who appeared in the same show.

---

18. Pingback: CUNTS OF A FEATHER | HOLLIE GREIG JUSTICE
19. Pingback: the Needle defends LAVERTY | HOLLIE GREIG JUSTICE
20.
21. **Alex**

May 19, 2020 at 2:43 am

My wife asked me the other day whether I remembered the film we had seen together in Gateshead in the late nineties.
I couldn't – in fact, I said, I didn't think I'd ever been to Gateshead.
"Oh, perhaps it was Sandy then" says she.
Perhaps it was, but, as I replied, it could just as easily have been me.
Thankfully – it seems – nothing bad happened. I wouldn't fancy either mine or Sandy's chances if it had.
Wouldn't a liar have realised (a) that he needed a story and (b) how easily this one could be checked? (also probably how pointless a lie it would be too). The one who clearly wouldn't have a story at the ready and might fall into this trap is the one who has genuinely forgotten.
It seem obvious to me which of the two that is.
I'm not surprised the prosecutor doesn't see it though. Isn't it classic confirmation bias? To think they've caught him out in a lie because it's a rape suspect saying it. It is obviously untrue. You never imagine how it would look if it was anyone else who said it (or was saying it about anything else). And if you can't see that, you're almost certainly not going to see why the innocent man might be at a bit of a disadvantage to the rapist when it came to recalling the events of that day.
Neither Sandy nor I have ever raped anyone. Nor, thankfully, my wife been raped.
Guess that's why none of us has anything useful to say on the subject of the film.
Very scary.

Eleanor

May 19, 2022 at 3:36 pm

Matthew, you may be interested to know that the private investigator and former New Zealand police detective who worked for Rolf Harris's new defence team in his second and third trials (acquitted/undecided jury) and appeal (one count overturned), has recently brought out a book about the case: "Rolf Harris: The Defence Team's Special Investigator reveals the Truth behind the Trials".

https://www.amazon.co.uk/Rolf-Harris-Defence-Special-Investigator/dp/1915338182/

 **Sonia Leeson**

May 24, 2023 at 4:22 am

I've always believed that Rolf Harris was innocent. Of course he liked innocently flirting with and chatting to young ladies, what younger man doesn't, but that doesn't constitute sexual abuse.
When Mr. Harris was imprisoned he was already frail, ill and 84 years old. That was an extremely cruel move. To take away all the honours he'd been awarded throughout his career was also cruel.
I hope these women who were gold digging to make money from him with their lies are happy now, knowing that he suffered for so long and then passed away from a particularly evil cancer.
They'll get their comeuppance, life has its own way of getting revenge on wrongdoers.
I hope everybody will leave the poor man alone now to rest in peace. It's so sad that he died without even being a given an apology for all the wrongdoing people had done against him.

https://barristerblogger.com/2017/11/19/rolf-harris-given-retrial/