

# Rolf Harris (1930-2023) — An Honest Obituary

The headline of one news website **announcing his death** reads: *Rolf Harris, convicted sex offender and entertainer, dies aged 93*. **Sadly, this *Guardian* obituary is as good as it gets. Apparently he died May 10 although the news didn't leak out until May 23; he was known to be suffering from cancer of the neck.**

The sexual abuse of the young is always an emotive subject, but there was a lot more to Rolf's fall from grace than the headlines and lurid tales of the cyber world would have you believe. Or perhaps that should be a lot less.

Rolf was born in Western Australia, and although a British resident since the 1950s, he never lost his Australian accent. His first claim to fame wasn't as an entertainer but as a swimmer, although in 1941 he won "a pair of racing pigeons" in the Under 13 section of a local art competition, not the last such competition he would win.

As a teenager he was a swimming champion but instead of pursuing a career in sports – not easy at that time – he moved to England to study art, and never left. In March 1958, he married his first and only wife, Alwen Hughes, who was also an artist, principally a sculptress. They had one child, Bindi, who was born in 1964.

Shortly after his move to England, Rolf began working in television. He continued to work in the media until his fall from grace. A unique

entertainer, he never made it in the United States but became a massive star in these islands and his native Australia. A fine artist as well as a comic artist/cartoonist, he was also a singer, multi-instrumentalist, occasional songwriter, raconteur and all-round entertainer. He was awarded the CBE, and in 2006 painted an official portrait of the Queen.

However, in 2012, he became arguably the biggest name to fall victim to the *Operation Yewtree* witch-hunt. After being found guilty on all twelve counts, he was sentenced in July 2014 to five years and nine months for sexual offences against four underage girls, which of course is extremely serious, but a close examination of the allegations reveals not four victims but one complainant.

*Operation Yewtree* was started after a large number of allegations against the late DJ/TV presenter Jimmy Savile, who has been demonised by the UK media. Two years before his death, Savile was **questioned by the police** about allegations of sexual assault dating back to the 1970s; he turned up without legal representation, answered all the questions Surrey Police asked as well as a few they didn't, and debunked them all. After his death, these allegations were revived by a one-sided, utterly dishonest TV documentary, and the allegations mushroomed.

Unable to prosecute a dead man, the imbeciles who control our criminal justice system went looking for live perpetrators, and found them in droves. It should be stressed that not all the targets of *Operation Yewtree* were innocent. The DJ Chris Denning was a predatory homosexual who had a long criminal history dating back to the 1970s, while the name Gary Glitter needs no explaining. What happened with Rolf though?

His daughter had a close friend who had travelled the world with her and Rolf. According to her, he had sexually abused her from the age of 13; according to him, she had become his mistress from when she was over the age of consent. Neither of these scenarios looks good but the latter is legal. In 1996, Bindi and her friend argued and the truth came out. The reason for that appears to have been Rolf having another mistress, a woman he had actually moved into the family garden if not the family home; Andi Kingston died relatively young in 1999.

After Bindi's confrontation with her friend, Rolf sent a handwritten letter to her parents. There were no police reports then, no action at all, although one imagines the friendship must have ended, but a decade and a half later, Hell had no fury like a woman scorned. If this had been the sole complainant, Rolf might well have escaped conviction albeit without his honour; instead, as with other victims of witch-hunts – **most notably Bill Cosby** on the other side of the Atlantic – other “victims” were encouraged to “come forward” – the sexual grievance industry loves that phrase. And come forward they did, in droves.

Three of Rolf's false accusers were deemed credible and were used to bolster the case against him. To poison the minds of the public as well as the jury, the CPS also charged him with downloading indecent images of children. These charges were quietly dropped. Countless artists have painted nudes, and Rolf was no exception. Two or three such paintings can be found with a simple Google search.

Two of his other accusers waived their anonymity. They were Wendy Wild (Wendy Rosher) now deceased, and Tonya Lee. The Wild

accusation was precisely that, wild; Lee's was also demonstrably false.

Wild claimed to have been indecently assaulted in public at an event at the Leigh Park Community Centre in the West of England at an unspecified date around 1968/9.

At that time, Rolf wasn't quite an A List celebrity but he was already a big star in Britain and would have charged a hefty fee. A small community centre would not have paid such a fee. If on the other hand it was a charity performance, perhaps through a personal connection, there would have been publicity to that effect. With my limited resources I searched the contemporaneous music press and local press but drew a blank. So did the police, they too found nothing except a local fantasist who backed up the story of the accusing fantasist. The CPS presented this non-evidence, the prosecution argued it, the judge permitted it, and the jury convicted on it. This is the problem with all allegations of any historicity, people – overwhelming women in cases like this – simply make things up, and people are told they must believe them or subscribe to “rape myths”.

The Tonya Lee allegation was equally false although she had at least met Rolf. Two female fans of Rolf – one who is known to me – carried out their own investigation including visiting the public house where Lee alleged Rolf had groped her. They even set up [a website](#).

After the Dave Lee Travis retrial, the falsely accused DJ stood outside Southwark Crown Court and thanked his legal team, including private investigator William Merritt. I looked up Merritt, was very impressed with him, and wrote to Rolf in prison advising him to hire Merritt. The rest [is history](#).

Not content with trashing Rolf's reputation and his life, the powers-that-be were intent on keeping him in prison until he died. Thanks to William Merritt and his team, they did not succeed. The new crop of false accusers were rejected by juries. Regarding Rolf's convictions, the Court Of Appeal [quashed the Wendy Wild conviction](#), one that should never have been made out, even though the Crown opposed it to the bitter end. Sadly, they did not quash the Tonya Lee conviction, otherwise they would have to have ordered a retrial.

I have to stress that I was never a big Rolf Harris fan, but for all my childhood and adult life there were three people ever present: the Queen, Shirley Bassey, and Rolf Harris. The Queen is easily explained. Shirley Bassey was a favourite of my adoptive mother because of her emotional performances. I think with Rolf it was because one of my earliest memories was of hearing him sing [\*Sun Arise\*](#). Now there remains only the Diva living in semi-retirement in Monaco, 86 years young.

If there is one thing that annoys me almost as much as this witch-hunt it is the fact that some people who have committed worse crimes inarguably, are not judged by the same standard. Mike Tyson committed a planned and quite ruthless date rape on a gullible teenager. He is also a self-confessed wife-beater, a convicted thug, and has a stupid tattoo on his face into the bargain, yet he is still used as an occasional sports pundit. Roman Polanski drugged and sexually violated a 13 year old then fled the country; he remains a fugitive at large, yet what did Whoopi Goldberg say about him? It wasn't "rape-rape". Seriously?

**Aside from that, Rolf's big mistake was being honest. If he had simply denied having an affair with his youthful accuser, his life and reputation would not have been trashed. Bill Cosby made the same mistake. Sadly, this is the world in which we now live.**