



## Rolf Harris cleared of latest historical child sex charges

Harris walked free from court after prosecutors said they would not seek a further retrial.



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Disgraced television star Rolf Harris has walked free from court after being cleared of the latest historical child sex charges against him.

Harris 87, was formally cleared of four counts of indecent assault against girls as young as 13 on Tuesday after a retrial ended with a hung jury.

The convicted paedophile had been released on licence from HMP Stafford part-way through the trial after serving less than three years of a five year and nine month sentence for unconnected sex attacks on young girls and women.

Harris, smartly dressed in a blue suit and lighter blue tie, left Southwark Crown Court in London in a media scrum on Tuesday but did not answer any questions.

In a statement read by his lawyer Daniel Berke outside court, the Australia-born ex-Animal Hospital presenter said he wanted to be left "in peace" with his frail wife Alwen, 85.



*Rolf Harris leaves court after prosecutors said they will not seek a second retrial (Gareth Fuller/PA)*

Harris said: "Whilst I'm pleased that this is finally all over, I feel no sense of victory, only relief. I'm 87 years old, my wife is in ill health and we simply want to spend our remaining time together in peace."

Harris is understood to still be pursuing an appeal against his original 2014 conviction for 12 indecent assaults – one on an eight-year-old autograph hunter, two on girls in their early teens and a catalogue of abuse of his daughter's friend over 16 years. But the latest charges were dismissed after prosecutors decided against undertaking what would have been a second retrial.

Harris had faced four charges of indecent assault over allegations involving three girls. He had been accused of indecently touching a 14-year-old girl in 1971 after she asked him for an autograph at a music event for children in London.



*Daniel Berke, lawyer for Rolf Harris, speaks to the media outside Southwark Crown Court (Gareth Fuller/PA)*

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". He was also alleged to have touched one complainant after a recording of the BBC children's show *Saturday Superstore* in 1983 before asking her "do you often get molested on a Saturday morning?"

Harris, who denied all the charges, did not give evidence, with his lawyers saying he did not remember any of the events in question. His lawyers claimed the women were motivated by greed, coming forward after he was convicted in the high profile trial in June 2014, in a bid for fake compensation payments.

Harris attended the January trial via video link from Stafford in what was believed to be a legal first. And during the second trial he made a similarly legally unique attempt to appear via video link from his home in Bray, Berkshire, saying he wished to spend more time with Alwen. This request was turned down by Judge Deborah Taylor after a private hearing and after his release on May 19 Harris appeared in court in person.



*Rolf Harris leaves Southwark Crown Court (Gareth Fuller/PA)*

Harris's release was revealed to the jury to explain his sudden appearance before them. But the seven women and five men were only told snippets of Harris's previous convictions and court appearances.

His legal team, led by Stephen Vullo QC, also made an unsuccessful attempt to have the case thrown out before it started, because of the media coverage of Harris's previous conviction for sex crimes against children.

After the second trial jury was unable to reach verdicts on four historical indecent assault charges on Tuesday, prosecutor Jonathan Rees QC told the court: "We have reviewed whether it would be appropriate to seek a further retrial on these allegations.

"We have come to the firm view that it would not. Accordingly we offer no evidence to the four counts on the indictment."



*Rolf Harris leaves court (Gareth Fuller/PA)*

Judge Taylor then formally found him not guilty of all four charges of indecent assault, which he had denied.

There was a cry of "well done Rolf" from the public gallery as the ex-television star left the courtroom.

