

18 March 2013

**Romantic Novelists' Association announce
RoNA Category Award Winners 2013**

Contemporary Romantic Novel winner - Mhairi McFarlane
Epic Romantic Novel winner - Rowan Coleman
Historical Romantic Novel winner - Charlotte Betts
Romantic Comedy Novel winner - Jenny Colgan
Young Adult Romantic Novel Winner - Victoria Lamb

Sophie Kinsella presented with Outstanding Achievement Award

Judy Finnigan and Richard Madeley this evening announced the five category winners who will contest the prestigious Romantic Novel of the Year. The novelists learnt of their success during a glittering reception specially held for the announcements at the RAF Club, Piccadilly, London.

The winning novels will now be read and judged by five independent industry experts, and the overall winner will be revealed at the Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) Summer Party on 16 May 2013.

Annie Ashurst, current RNA Chair, told the capacity gathering of some 250 romantic fiction authors, publishers and guests how proud the Association was of its finalists and winners.

"Tonight we are here to celebrate the success of our brightest stars. We are proud of their talent, tenacity and dedication to their craft. It is a lonely thing to write a novel, and to keep on going even as doubts set in - as they do with us all. Our Awards give us an opportunity to publicly recognising the enjoyment you bring to your readers. Congratulations to you all."

Long-time RNA member, Sophie Kinsella, was honoured with an **Outstanding Achievement Award** for her continued contribution to the world of romantic fiction.

The category winners 2013

The **Contemporary Category** is for mainstream romantic novels set after 1960. **Mhairi McFarlane** was named winner with *You Had Me At Hello*, after Katie Fforde stepped down. To compete for the Romantic Novel of the Year all category winners must be present at the RNA Summer Party on 16 May and conflicting travel plans left Katie unable to attend. The other competing authors included Veronica Henry, Monica McInerney, Sue Moorcroft and Polly Williams.

In the **Epic Category**, which deals with issues or themes including multi-generational novels, **Rowan Coleman** triumphed with *Dearest Rose*. Other finalists included Madeline Miller, Dilly Court, Kate Moreton, Gill Paul and Liz Trenow.

Finalists in the **Historical Category** (set before 1960) included Charlotte Betts, Christina Courtenay, Kate Furnivall, Pamela Hartshorne, Susanne Kearsley and Mary Nichols. **Charlotte Betts** was declared the winner with her novel *The Apothecary's Daughter*.

In the **Romantic Comedy Category**, for consistently humorous or amusing novels, the finalists included Jenny Colgan, Victoria Connelly, Jane Costello, Nicola Doherty, Belinda Jones and Jane Wenham-Jones. **Jenny Colgan** claimed victory with *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*.

The **Young Adult Category** features protagonists who are teenagers or young adults and the shortlist this year included Jo Cotterill, Laura Jarratt, Marie-Louise Jensen, Victoria Lamb, Sarra Manning and Susan Waggoner. **Victoria Lamb** was declared winner with her book *Witchstruck*.

The RoNA Rose Award, which recognises the best in category/series and shorter romance that focuses on a developing love affair between hero and heroine, was presented for the second year running to **Sarah Mallory**, author of *Beneath the Major's Scars*. Her rivals included: Fiona Harper, Heidi Rice, Carol Townend, and Scarlett Wilson, who had two books nominated. This category does not go forward to contest for the Romantic Novel of the Year.

Cover images for all the category winners can be found at:

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/index.php/activities/photo_galleries

About the Awards

Novels submitted for the RoNA categories are chosen by the public who are not members of the RNA. Each title is read by three readers and awarded marks using score sheets specific to the category of the book. Readers are drawn from a register of nearly 100 volunteers who come from a wide variety of backgrounds and range in age from 20 to 85 years, all have a passion for romantic novels.

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There follows a brief description of each of the winning category novels:

Contemporary Romantic Novel

Mhairi McFarlane, *You Had Me At Hello*, Avon

Epic Romantic Novel

Rowan Coleman, *Dearest Rose, Arrow*

Rowan Coleman lives in Berkhamstead, Hertfordshire.

One letter, one love, one chance ... When one rainy night, Rose Pritchard takes her seven-year-old daughter Maddie and walks out on her life and her marriage, she is doing more than running away from a truth she can't bear to face. She is following a promise made a long time ago, a dream and hope. Following her heart into deepest Cumbria, Rose comes face to face with her past, and at last, finds strength to begin her life again.

Historical Romantic Novel

Charlotte Betts, *The Apothecary's Daughter*, Piatkus (Little, Brown Book Group)

Charlotte Betts lives in Berkshire.

1665: Susannah Leyton has grown up behind the counter of her father's apothecary shop in bustling Fleet Street. More learned than any apprentice, she concocts soothing medicines and ointments with great skill. Content with her life, Susannah is dealt a shocking blow when her widowed father marries again, and her new stepmother is determined to remove her from the apothecary for good. A proposal of marriage from the charming Henry Savage seems to offer her an escape and she resolves to be a good wife to him. But as the plague sweeps through London, tragedy strikes, and dark secrets in her husband's past begin to unfold. It will take all of Susanna's courage and passion to save herself from tragedy.

Romantic Comedy Novel

Jenny Colgan, *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, Sphere (Little, Brown Book Group)

Jenny Colgan lives in France.

Rosie Hopkins thinks leaving her busy London life, and her boyfriend Gerard, to sort out her elderly Aunt Lilian's sweetshop in a small country village is going to be dull. How wrong could she have been? Lilian Hopkins has spent her life running Lipton's sweetshop, through wartime and family feuds. As she struggles with the idea that it might finally be time to settle up, she also wrestles with the secret history hidden behind the jars of beautifully coloured sweets.

Young Adult Romantic Novel

Victoria Lamb, *Witchstruck*, Corgi (RHCP)

Victoria Lamb lives in Cornwall.

Meg Lytton has always known of her dark and powerful gift. Raised a witch from early childhood, concocting spells from herbs and bones is as natural to Meg as breathing. But there has never been a more dangerous time to practice the craft, for it is 1554, and the punishment for any woman branded a witch is death. Sent to the isolated palace of Woodstock, Meg discovers her magic is of interest to the banished princess, who is desperate to know if she will ever claim the throne. Meg's existence becomes more dangerous every day, with the constant threat of witch finder Marcus Dent, and the arrival of a smouldering, young Spanish priest, Alejandro de Castillo, to whom she is irresistibly drawn.

RoNA Rose Winner

Sarah Mallory, *Beneath the Major's Scars*, Harlequin Mills & Boon Historical

Sarah Mallory lives in Yorkshire.

After being shamelessly seduced by a married man, Zelah finds her reputation in tatters. Determined to rise above the gossips, Zelah knows she can only rely on herself. But her independence takes a knock when a terrifying stranger comes to her aid. Major Dominic Coale's formidable manner is notorious, though Zelah shows no sign of fear. She doesn't cower at his touch as she begins to glimpse the man behind the scars.

Notes to Editors

About the Romantic Novelists' Association (RNA)

The RNA was formed in 1960 to promote romantic fiction and encourage good writing and now represents more than 700 writers, agents, editors and other publishing professionals. The Romantic Novel of the Year Award was launched in the same year, and recognises excellence in romantic novels thereby enhancing the standing of the genre.

The RNA has always involved readers in judging the awards. Keen readers are asked to rate nominated books on a number of criteria including romantic content, readability, characters, plot, dialogue, style and ending. These readers' favourites are then presented to the expert independent judges, who decide the overall winners.

The 2012 Romantic Novel of the Year award winner was Jane Lovering, for *Please Don't Stop The Music*, published by Choc Lit. Other recent winners include Julia Gregson, Freya North, Rosie Thomas, Jojo Moyes and Philippa Gregory. The 2012 RoNA Rose was won by Sarah Mallory, for *The Dangerous Lord Darrington*, published by HMB Historical Regency. A list of past winners for both awards can be found at www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org.