

PRESS RELEASE

17 March 2014

Romantic Novel of the Year Award winner

Veronica Henry triumphs with

A Night on the Orient Express

**Trophy and £5000 cheque
presented by Darcey Bussell CBE**

RoNA Rose winner collects a trophy and £1000 cheque

**Dr. David Hessayon and Helen Fielding receive
RNA Outstanding Achievement Awards**

Veronica Henry triumphed over her fellow competing authors to win the Romantic Novelists' Association's highest accolade, the Romantic Novel of the Year with *A Night on the Orient Express*, published by Orion. Darcey Bussell, CBE presented Veronica with her trophies and a cheque for £5000.

The independent panel of five judges were fulsome in their praise of Veronica's book

"Most accomplished and most romantic - it epitomises romance."

"One cared about the characters, who were from different times of life."

"Good pace, it really was a page turner."

"The characters were well differentiated, and continued to develop
throughout."

"Feel good romantic book with very natural dialogue."

Veronica's novel won the Contemporary Romantic Novel of the Year Category, for which she also received a specially engraved star-shaped trophy. Her book then went forward, along with those of the four other category winners - Epic, Historical, Romantic Comedy and Young Adult - to contest the Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) most coveted award, the Romantic Novel of the Year.

The independent judges read the five genre category winners novels before meeting to debate the finer points of each book. This year the judges included Sarah Broadhurst, *The Bookseller*; Alison Flood, *Guardian.co.uk*; Jane Mays, *The Daily Mail*; Karin Stoecker, ex-Editorial Director, Harlequin Books and Chris White of Waterstones.

The RoNA Rose Award

This Award is for shorter category/series fiction and while it does not go forward to contest the main award, the authors are recognised through the presentation of a trophy and, this year, a cheque for £1000. These were presented by Darcey Bussell to Kate Hardy for her book *Bound By A Baby*, published by Harlequin Mills & Boon.

Romantic Novel of the Year Category Winners

Just prior to announcing the main award winner Darcey Bussell recognised the achievements of the category winners by revealing who had won and presenting them with star-shaped trophies, engraved with their names and genre. The winners were:

Jennifer McVeigh, *The Fever Tree*, Penguin

Winner Epic Category Romantic Novel of the Year

(for mainstream romantic novels set post 1960 and can include genres such as chic lit, paranormal and romantic suspense)

Christina Courtenay, *The Gilded Fan*, Choc Lit

***Winner Historical Category Romantic Novel of the Year**

(for novels set in a period before 1960)

Milly Johnson, *It's Raining Men*, Simon & Schuster

***Winner Romantic Comedy Category Romantic Novel of the Year**

(for consistently humorous or amusing novels)

Imogen Howson, *Linked*, Quercus

***Winner Young Adult Category Romantic Novel of the Year**

(features protagonists who are teenagers or young adults)

Katie Fforde, President of the RNA said, "Every year we are astounded by the quality of writing and enthusiasm from our entrants. Their passion is evident in their writing and all can be proud of having been part of the Awards this year. Our congratulations go to Veronica Henry, who is thoroughly deserving of her win and provided the judges with an intriguing plot with some twisty turns that delivered what can only be described as a page-turning novel. All in all a very well-earned win."

Outstanding Achievement Awards

Helen Fielding, author of the popular Bridget Jones novels, who defined the romantic angst of a generation, and Dr. David Hessayon were both presented with outstanding achievement awards.

Dr. David Hessayon is a long-time friend of the RNA, having sponsored for many years the association's annual award recognising the best in new writing. The Joan Hessayon Award is named in memory of his late wife, an ardent and longstanding member of the RNA and great supporter of New Writers' Scheme (NWS).

Cover images for all the novels, together with author photographs, can be found at:

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

High resolution pictures of the Romantic Novel of the Year Awards can be found in the media section of our website

http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/news/media_centre

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About the Romantic Novelists' Association

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 2013 Romantic Novel of the Year Award winner was Jenny Colgan, for *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, published by Sphere. Other recent winners include Jane Lovering, Julia Gregson, Freya North, Rosie Thomas, Jojo Moyes and Philippa Gregory. The Joan Hessayon Award in 2013 was won by Liesel Schwarts with her steampunk novel *A Conspiracy of Alchemists*, published by Ebury Press/DelRey and the 2013 RoNA Rose was won by Sarah Mallory, for *Beneath The Major's Scars*, published by Harlequin Historical.

A list of past winners of RNA awards can be found at

www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org

About Veronica Henry

After studying Latin at the University of Bristol Veronica Henry began her career as a production secretary on *The Archers*, where her duties ranged from organising Shula Archer's wedding photographs with Patrick Lichfield to playing Peaches the barmaid in the *Cat and Fiddle*.

From there she went to Central Television to script-edit such broadcasting greats as *Crossroads* and *Boon*. She left to have her first child in 1990 and became a scriptwriter, writing hundreds of hours of broadcast television for *Heartbeat*, *Doctors* and *Holby City* amongst others.

She turned to writing novels in the year 2000 using her well-honed skills to write compelling, multi-protagonist fiction. *A Night on the Orient Express* is her eleventh novel.

Veronica also writes features and short stories for newspapers and magazine including *The Daily Mail*, *Woman & Home*, *Red Magazine*. She lives in North Devon with her husband and three sons.

<http://www.veronicahenry.co.uk>