



## **PRESS RELEASE**

16 May 2013

### **Jenny Colgan wins Romantic Novel of the Year with *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams***

Praise for Jenny's novel from the judges

**"There is an element of surprise, which is unusual in a romantic novel,  
a page-turner that keeps you guessing"**

**"An accomplished piece of work, well plotted and well constructed"**

Jenny Colgan has triumphed with her romantic comedy novel, *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams*, published by Sphere. She has been awarded the Romantic Novelists' Association's (RNA) highest accolade, the Romantic Novel of the Year 2013. The judges found their final decision difficult to come to and said, "It really was a close run thing." Jenny was presented with her award by bestselling historical novelist and creator of the 'Falco' series, Lindsey Davis.

Five independent industry professionals adjudicated: Sarah Broadhurst, *The Bookseller*; Jane Mays, *The Daily Mail*; Alison Flood, *Guardian.co.uk*; Jonathan Ruppin, Foyles and Chris White, Waterstones.

Coming together for the first time after having read all five finalists' novels, the judges were divided between Jenny's book and another that came a very close second. They said, "We debated the finer points of each novel for over an hour but in the end Jenny won by a nose, thanks to her impeccable plotting and structure."

The judges found that the entries this year were of an exceptionally high standard and that was the reason for their impassioned debate before declaring Jenny Colgan the winner.

The Romantic Novel of the Year award is the highest accolade that the RNA can bestow upon on an author. The award recognises the very highest standards of romantic fiction and Jenny has won through, despite being pitted against some of the genre's most prolific, best-respected and gifted authors.

Jenny, whose novel is based in rural Derbyshire, drew her inspiration from her love for old James Herriot books and wrote *Welcome to Rosie Hopkins' Sweetshop of Dreams* in tribute to the sweetshops of her childhood.

The books that vied for the Romantic Novel of the Year title were the category winners of the annual Romantic Novel Awards, which took place in February. Jenny was winner of the Romantic Comedy category. The other contenders were: Mhairi McFarlane with her debut book, *You Had Me At Hello*, published by Avon; Rowan Coleman, Epic Category winner with *Dearest Rose*, published by Arrow; Charlotte Betts, Historical Category winner with *The Apothecary's Daughter*, published by Piatkus and Victoria Lamb, Young Adult category winner and author of *Witchstruck*, published by Corgi.

Pia Fenton, RNA Chairman said, "The standard was so high this year that every finalist can be justly proud of her book. Unfortunately there can only be one winner and our warmest congratulations go to Jenny Colgan, who produced a real page-turner of a novel, combining romance, comedy and nostalgia. She thoroughly deserves her win."

Also presented at the RNA summer party was the association's annual recognition for the best in new writing, the Joan Hessayon Award. This is generously sponsored by Dr David Hessayon in memory of his late wife, Joan, who was a longstanding member of the RNA and a great supporter of its New Writers' Scheme.

This year the Joan Hessayon Award was won by Liesel Schwartz with *A Conspiracy of Alchemists*, published in February by Ebury Press/DelRey. Liesel took home a cheque and a silver trophy.

There were nine contenders in total for the award this year including: Jenny Barden, *Mistress of the Sea* published by Ebury Press/Random House; Serena Clarke with *All Over the Place* published by Crimson; Ann Stenhouse's *Mariah's Marriage* from MuseItUp; Henriette Gyland is author of *Up Close* published by Choc Lit; while Liz Harris wrote *The Road Back*, also published by Choc Lit. Carol McGrath's *The Handfasted Wife* is published by Accent Press; Cathy Mansell wrote *Shadow Across the Liffey* from Tirgearr while *Tainted Innocence* by Joss Alexander was published by Carina. All received a certificate and a cheque.

Cover images of all the novels can be found at:

[http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/index.php/activities/photo\\_galleries](http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/index.php/activities/photo_galleries)

Images of the presentation of the awards to winners Jenny Colgan and Liesel Schwartz on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> May can be accessed from 10 pm at

[http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/index.php/news/media\\_centre](http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org/index.php/news/media_centre)

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**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

Joan Hessayon Award in 2012 was won by Evonne Wareham for *Never Coming Home* (Choc Lit).

A list of past winners of RNA awards can be found at [www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org](http://www.romanticnovelistsassociation.org)