



22 January 2010

## Press Release

### Novel Debut for Museum Inspired Book

Halesowen-born writer, Anna Lawrence Pietroni, returns to her roots and the source of her inspiration – The Black Country Living Museum, to launch her debut novel 'Ruby's Spoon' on Saturday 6th February 2010. Anna will present a talk in the Workers' Institute followed by a book signing in the Museum shop. Normal Museum admission prices apply.

A former prison warden, Anna Lawrence Pietroni grew up in Halesowen and is the granddaughter and great granddaughter of chainmakers. The heavily industrialised region with its reputation for making nails, chain, and horn buttons has shaped and inspired her writing, although Anna has not lived in the Black Country since leaving home for college.

'Ruby's Spoon', published by Chatto and Windus, is set in the industrial Black Country of the 1930s. It is the tale of three women – one witch, one mermaid and one missing – and how a young girl was caught up in between...

'When Isa Fly appears in the doorway of Captain Len's Fried Fish Shop, thirteen-year-old Ruby is entranced. Isa comes from the coast where the air is fresh; unlike Ruby's home in Cradle Cross, its factory furnaces pumping and filthy slits of canal water sending up a stink.'

The Museum's Fried Fish Shop, hardware shop, ironworks and canal basin were all sources of inspiration for the author, who filmed a promotional video for her novel at the Dudley museum in July of last year.

Publicist Bethan Jones of Random House said: "This is a bold and bewitching debut, with a fiercely charismatic heroine and heralds the arrival of a mesmerising new literary talent. The Black Country isn't just the backdrop for this charming book: with its rich industrial heritage and age-old dialects, the Black Country has inspired this story, shaping the way the characters think and speak and move."

'Ruby's Spoon' began life as an exercise on a short writing course arranged as a 30th birthday present, when Anna was given a few words to prompt a story. The words were 'spoon', 'button factory', 'witch' and 'fire'. It took five years to finish the exercise.

-Ends-

## **Note to Editors:**

### **About the Author**

Born in the shadow of the button factory in Halesowen, Anna Lawrence Pietroni knew she wanted to be a writer at the age of five. Anna has not lived in Halesowen since leaving for college, but its history and landscape have shaped and inspired her writing.

Anna gained a double first in English from Oxford University and a Masters' degree in Children's Literature from Warwick University. She won a British Academy scholarship to study for a PhD in eighteenth century children's literature, but gave it up after five miserable months and fled to London.

Anna was recruited at 28 to HM Prison Service on a fast-track governor training scheme. She worked on a women's remand wing at HMP Holloway and with life-sentenced men at HMP Wormwood Scrubs. Anna took a break from the Prison Service when her first child was born in 2002, but, apart from a short stint working with a resettlement team, has not been back since.

Anna Lawrence Pietroni knew she wanted to be a writer at the age of five, but, until 'Ruby's Spoon', had only managed to complete a few poems, two very short stories (all unpublished) and one academic article.

Anna recently moved with her family to Boston, USA. She is available for interview and to write articles and will be in the UK in February for publication.

Ruby's Spoon is published by Chatto & Windus on 4th February 2010, £12.  
For more information or to interview Anna please contact Bethan Jones on 020 7840 8543 or e-mail [bjones@randomhouse.co.uk](mailto:bjones@randomhouse.co.uk)

### **About the Museum**

The Black Country Living Museum was opened to the public in 1978 and sets out to:

- Collect and preserve material relating to the Black Country.
- Research the story of the Black Country, its people and industries.
- To communicate that story to the widest possible audience.

The Black Country Living Museum is an award-winning Museum which offers a unique view of the historic Black Country region, uniting the past and the present in an unforgettable 'living' experience.

Attracting more than 313,000 visitors annually from a worldwide visitor base, the 26-acre Dudley Museum is home to a thriving period community. Shops, houses, and workplaces inhabited by costumed guides have been reclaimed from their original locations and moved brick by brick to the Museum.

**Photographic Information:** Image attached

**Image Caption:**

**For further information:**

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