

RUTLAND LOCAL HISTORY & RECORD SOCIETY

Registered Charity No. 700273

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*** *PRESS INFORMATION* ***
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Personal Achievement Award for local historians



*Sheila Sleath and Robert Ovens with the copy of *The Heritage of Rutland Water* presented to HM The Queen*

The Rutland Local History & Record Society (RLHRS) is delighted to announce that two of its long-standing members, Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath, have been presented with a joint Personal Achievement Award by the British Association for Local History (BALH) in this year's awards.

Each year the BALH invites nominations for these awards, which are designed to give public recognition to people who have made significant voluntary contributions to local history, so essential to the vitality of the subject today. A maximum of six such awards may be given each year, and in June this year it was announced that one of the 2020 awards would go jointly to Robert and

Sheila. Normally the presentation would take place at a national event in London, but since this has not been possible this year the announcements have been made on-line via the BALH's media feeds.

Under the heading 'Outstanding contributions to the history of the county through activities and publications of Rutland Local History & Record Society', the full citation reads:

'For more than twenty years Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath, childhood friends from the Rutland village of Belton, have made outstanding contributions to the history of the county through their voluntary work in pursuance of the objects of the Rutland Local History & Record Society.

*'Two joint achievements take pride of place: first, the publication in 2002 of *Time in Rutland: a history and gazetteer of the bells, scratch dials, sundials and clocks of Rutland* (ISBN 0-907464-30-0), a definitive and masterful compendium; and secondly the compilation and editing of *The Heritage of Rutland Water* (2007, reprinted 2008, ISBN 978-0-907464-39-6), a multi-disciplinary volume recording everything from the construction of the reservoir to the history of the parishes affected, taking in its archaeology and natural history on the way. They continue to contribute articles to the annual *Rutland Record* on various subjects.*

*'Robert has served as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of its Executive Committee, and has regularly produced the Society's spring *Newsletter*, arranged its autumn Rutland village visits, and organised its*

annual George Phillips and Tony Traylen historic environment awards, all with background support from the modest Sheila.

‘The reputation and status of the Society have gained immeasurably from their joint unstinting support.’

The Rutland Local History & Record Society’s Chair, Debbie Frearson, said, ‘We are immensely proud of both Robert and Sheila. Their body of work has increased our understanding of Rutland, and their willingness to share their plethora of experience makes them wonderful people to learn from. They are deserving recipients of this award’.

Robert Ovens, speaking on behalf of Sheila and himself, said, ‘It was all a big surprise! But we’re really pleased to have received this award, because the history of our county has been a big part of our lives for a long time and it’s nice to have our efforts recognised in this way!’.

Councillor Lucy Stephenson, Rutland County Council’s portfolio holder for culture and leisure, added, ‘This is such exciting and well deserved news. We are fortunate in Rutland to have such a rich history at every turn but it is the enthusiasm, dedication and expertise of volunteers such as Sheila and Robert that ensure this history is preserved for the enjoyment and understanding of us all.’

Robert and Sheila’s work goes on: Robert has been busy indexing the Society’s next occasional publication which will be on seventeenth century Rutland, and Sheila will have an article on Oakham clockmakers in the next *Rutland Record* which will be published towards the end of the year.

The BALH also gives awards for articles published in the journals of local history societies up and down the country. Competition for these awards is fierce, but on three occasions articles in the RLHRS’s annual publication *Rutland Record* have also won such awards.

Notes for Editors

Although *The Heritage of Rutland Water* is now out of print, it is freely available on the Society’s website at www.rutlandhistory.org along with many of the Society’s other publications.

The photograph of Robert Ovens and Sheila Sleath is available as a separate PDF file if required.

For further information, please contact: Tim Clough, Honorary Editor, RLHRS, Rutland County Museum, Catmose Street, Oakham, Rutland, LE15 6HW, or e-mail editor@rutlandhistory.org.

30th June 2020

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