

HANSON, CARL AUGUST (1872 - 1961), first head of the bindery at the National Library of Wales

Name: Carl August Hanson

Date of birth: 1872

Date of death: 1961

Spouse: Edith Hanson (née Gwynne)

Gender: Male

Occupation: first head of the bindery at the National Library of Wales

Area of activity: History and Culture; Printing and Publishing

Author: David Jenkins

Born in 1872 in Oslo, Norway. About 1898 he came to London to seek work as a bookbinder and was employed by J. Zaehnsdorf in Shaftsbury Avenue. Three years later he joined the famous firm of Riviere and Sons, Regent Street, with whom he remained for ten years gaining considerable experience in repairing manuscripts and books. During this period he married Edith Gwynne (1871 - 1950); they had four children. In 1911, the recently opened National Library of Wales urgently required an experienced craftsman to repair and rebind (where necessary) many of the rare manuscripts and books in the Peniarth and Llanstephan libraries which Sir John Williams had donated as foundation collections. From three strongly recommended applicants Carl Hanson was unanimously appointed. The leaves of many of the manuscripts written on paper were too fragile to be issued to readers, and consequently, in the case of hand-made paper, Hanson developed a process of splitting the damaged leaf and pasting the two halves to a new sheet of paper. He (and ultimately his staff) thus recovered many thousands of rare books and manuscripts, thereby enabling scholars to publish reliable and complete texts of a whole series of literary classics which proved indispensable for the development of modern Welsh scholarship. The University of Wales acknowledge his unique contribution in 1955 when he was awarded an honorary M.A. degree.

From his London days, Hanson was an ardent trade unionist, and within a year of his arrival at Aberystwyth he was elected vice-chairman of the North Cardiganshire Council of Trade Unions which he helped to establish. At the end of World War I he and a few friends formed a branch of the Labour Party and opened the first Co-operative Stores in the town. He took up his appointment at the National Library on 1 January 1912 and did not retire until 30 June 1959 when he celebrated his 87th birthday! He died 26 September 1961 and was buried in Llangorwen churchyard, Clarach.

Author

Dr David Jenkins, (1912 - 2002)

Sources

Personal knowledge

Additional Links

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