

Besides being a noted figure in the wool textile trade, MR. OSWALD M. STROUD (right) is a successful farmer and he has a long record of social and charitable work. He's also a man who changed his name because of Hitler.

A harvest after the hard work

PEOPLE
by Frank Higginson



The baker had been busy at his oven. He had made some wholemeal bread. He gave me a piece, spread with butter. It was delicious.

But more remarkable than the bread was the baker, none other than 77-year-old Mr. Oswald M. Stroud, for half a century a leading figure in the Bradford wool textile trade.

Cooking is one of his hobbies and he specially likes to bake wholemeal bread.

He's a man who has often cast his bread upon the waters.

He did that, I suppose, when only a week after being discharged from the Middlesex Regiment in 1919 he scraped together what little money he had and put it into a tiny textile business in a cellar hole in Bradford.

The partner who joined him in launching that modest enterprise was Mr. L. Wynne Riley, whom he had met several years earlier while both were studying textiles at Bradford Technical College.

With a long struggle they built up the business, its staff growing from two to 800. Both Mr. Stroud, who had been chairman, and his co-founder retired from the board of Stroud Riley Textile Group in July, 1972.

But Mr. Stroud still has other interests, chief of which is his flourishing farm at Bolton Percy, near York. His interest in farming germinated when, for his health's sake, he was sent from Bradford at the age of ten to live for a while at a farm in Wales.

From that time he wanted a farm and he bought one in Nidderdale in 1928. Eighteen years later came the move to the present farm, where he has a herd of more than 100 Hereford cattle. He's a successful show exhibitor — he's had a first prize at the Royal

Show — and he is president of the Hereford Northern Breeders' Association.

Such a man is Mr. Stroud. Only he wasn't always called Stroud. Hitler caused him to change his name.

His father was Dr. Joseph Strauss, who came from Germany in 1872 when he was appointed Bradford's first Rabbi. A bearded figure with a ready smile, he walked much, spurning the trams. And each day he used to walk from his home in St. Paul's Road, Manningham, to Bradford Mechanics' Institute to read the papers.

He sent his son Oswald to be educated at Belle Vue School and Bingley Grammar School and later to Bradford Technical College, where he twice won the City and Guilds first prize and medal in textiles.

But the lad who made textiles his business found in 1933, as Hitler's menace grew, that the name Strauss was a disadvantage. A customer in London threatened, "I'll do no more trade with damned Germans."

He didn't realise that the man whose name he disliked had not only served in the British Army but had joined with his brother-in-law, Mr. Joseph Morris, to buy a big house in which to accommodate refugees from Hitler's Germany.

Anyway, the go-ahead young textile manufacturer changed his name to Stroud.

He had married soon after starting in business. He and his wife celebrated their golden wedding in February, 1970. They have a son and two daughters, 12 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Mrs. Stroud has joined her husband in much of his social and charitable work, including that for the Bradford branch of the Multiple Sclerosis Society, of which he was the first chairman. He is now the president.

He is also a member and past president of Bradford Rotary Club, vice-president and a former chairman of Bradford Local Savings Committee, a former chairman of the Finance Subcommittee of Bradford "A" Group Hospital Management Committee, a former member of Bradford Health Executive Council and a former chairman of Bradford Synagogue.

In 1964 he was awarded the OBE. For 15 years he has served as a Bradford magistrate.

An associate of the Textile Institute, Mr. Stroud is delighted that his son, Mr. Roy V. Stroud, the present chairman of Stroud Riley and Co. Ltd. (now part of the Stroud Riley Drummond Group) has been newly

elected chairman of the Wool Textile Delegation.

Mr. Oswald Stroud's home is at Sefton Lodge, Park Drive, Heaton, Bradford, little more than half a mile from where he was born.

"I love Bradford," he says. "It's a bit cold, a bit draughty and a bit short of sunshine and its hills seem to me to become annually a bit steeper, but it has the most wonderful people that one could wish to meet — kindly, friendly people."

"And I want to say that Bradford's textile trade provides for other industries a splendid example of what the relations should be between employers and employed. It's been like that in all my 77 years. I'm proud to be a Bradfordian and proud to be a member of the textile industry."

But now, resting from his efforts in the industry, he can devote more time to hobbies, among them the cultivation of plants in his greenhouse, writing his memoirs and listening to music.

One of his distant relatives through his mother

was Mendelssohn and his three favourite composers are Mozart, Mendelssohn and Beethoven — in that order.

He's one of the most travelled Bradfordians. Business has taken him to almost every part of the world. Nowhere has he been more impressed by what he has seen than in Israel.

He has seen a boundary fence running for miles upon miles with nothing but rock and sand on one side and on the other side magnificent green fields and trees stretching far into the distance.

And he has seen such a fence with an Israeli sentry on one side and an Arab sentry on the other, both armed with rifles, yet tossing cigarettes over the fence for each other in a most comradely way.

"That's the attitude of the ordinary people," he declares. "In Israel the people yearn for peace, pray for peace... Peace in which to till the earth, manufacture their products and bring up their families. And, my goodness, they deserve peace."