

# His proud record with W'ton firm

**T**ODAY Mr. Charlie Smith, of 129, Coalway-road, Penn, Wolverhampton, began his 65th year in the bookbinding craft. Youngsters who change their jobs constantly would find a sobering contrast in Charlie Smith's work record.

Now, aged 77, he has worked 64 years for the same firm — 63 years for J. W. Braithwaite and Son, Ltd., and before that one year for the bookbinding business which the late Mr. J. W. Braithwaite bought in 1900 from a Mr. Willard.

The business, founded by a Willard in 1840, occupied premises in King-street, Wolverhampton, until 1929 when it was moved to its present buildings in Castle-street, Wolverhampton.

## WHEN SEVEN

Born at Smethwick, Charlie Smith was brought by his parents to live in Wolverhampton when he was seven.

Charlie was the fifth-born of his parents nine children, having four brothers and four sisters.

At 13 he started working for Willard's, soon to become Braithwaite's.

The staff then totalled 14, all of them girls except for Mr. Braithwaite himself and two apprentices, Ben Tomkys and Charlie. Today the firm employs about 70 women and 30 men.

Ben died in 1909, but his mirror—a treasured memento—still hangs over the bench at which Charlie works.

He remembers when they all worked between 65 and 83 hours a week throughout an 18-month period in his young days.

With only short tea breaks they worked all day each Saturday, all through Saturday night until Sunday lunch-time.

That was done to complete an order for 45,000 catalogues for Bayliss Jones and Bayliss, Ltd., engineers, of Wolverhampton.

He married in 1915 and later that year enlisted in the South Staffordshire Regiment.

After service in France, Africa, India and Afghanistan, Charlie was "demobbed" in 1920 and returned to his craft at Braithwaite's.

His wife died in 1941. Their daughter, a physiotherapist at Wordsley Hospital, lives with him.

Every year since 1946 Charlie Smith has spent a holiday abroad.

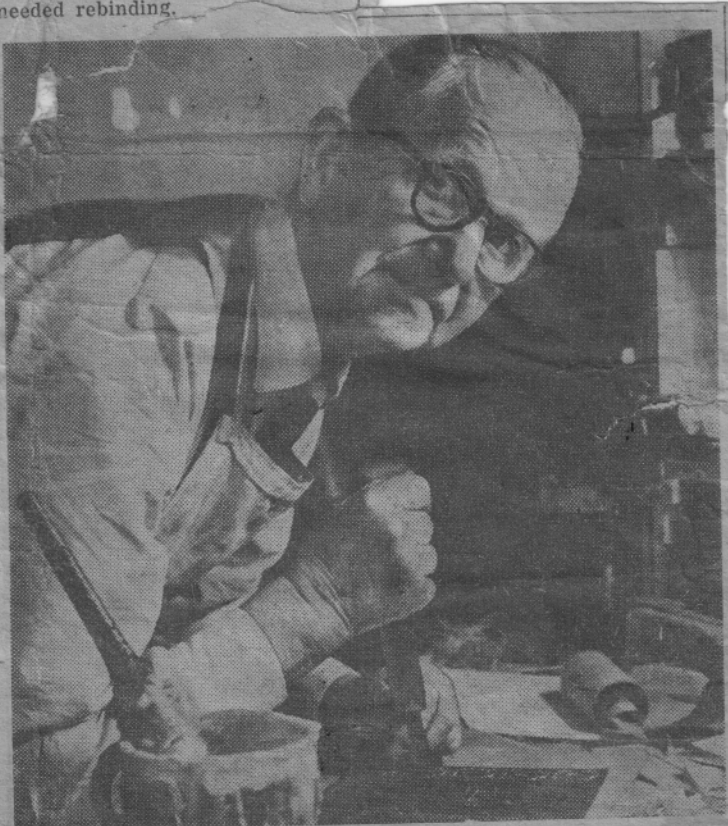
So far he has been on holiday in France, Italy, Austria, Holland, Belgium and Spain.

He has bound several books for presentation to members of the royal family.

The first was a volume of "Pilgrim's Progress" for Dr. E. S. Woods, a former Bishop of Lichfield, to give as a 21st birthday present to the Queen when she was still Princess Elizabeth.

Also bound by Charlie Smith was a copy of the records of Wolverhampton Grammar School which the Queen received during her visit to Wolverhampton in May, 1962.

The most recent book he bound was a prayerbook, originally bound nearly 100 years ago, which needed rebinding.



Mr. Charlie Smith (77), who has worked for 64 years for J. W. Braithwaite and Son, Ltd., bookbinders, of Castle-street, Wolverhampton.