

HSBC Archives

HSBC has an international pedigree which is unique. Many of its principal companies opened for business over a century ago and they have a history which is rich in variety and achievement.

HSBC Archives are among the most important and heavily used bank archives in the world. The archivists are responsible for the collection and management of the records, which span more than two centuries of financial and international history.

Our collection

The archives contain historical records from many of the banks which make up the modern HSBC Group. Types of records include:

- ◆ Board minute books
- ◆ Annual reports
- ◆ Staff records
- ◆ Photographs of branches, staff and local scenes
- ◆ Adverts and promotional videos

The archivists are able to carry out research in response to specific enquiries. Typical questions include:

- ◆ *My grandfather worked for the bank.*
- ◆ *Can you give me any details about his career?*
- ◆ *How long has HSBC been operating in Malaysia?*
- ◆ *When did Midland Bank become part of the HSBC Group?*
- ◆ *Can you provide images for publications and film productions?*
- ◆ *Can you tell me more about the history of my local branch?*

Contact us

Email: history@hsbc.com

Please write to us at HSBC Archives, Level 41, 8 Canada Square, London E14 5HQ, or visit www.hsbc.com/history.

**HSBC Archives is open to researchers Monday to Thursday.
Admittance is by appointment only.**

www.hsbc.com/history

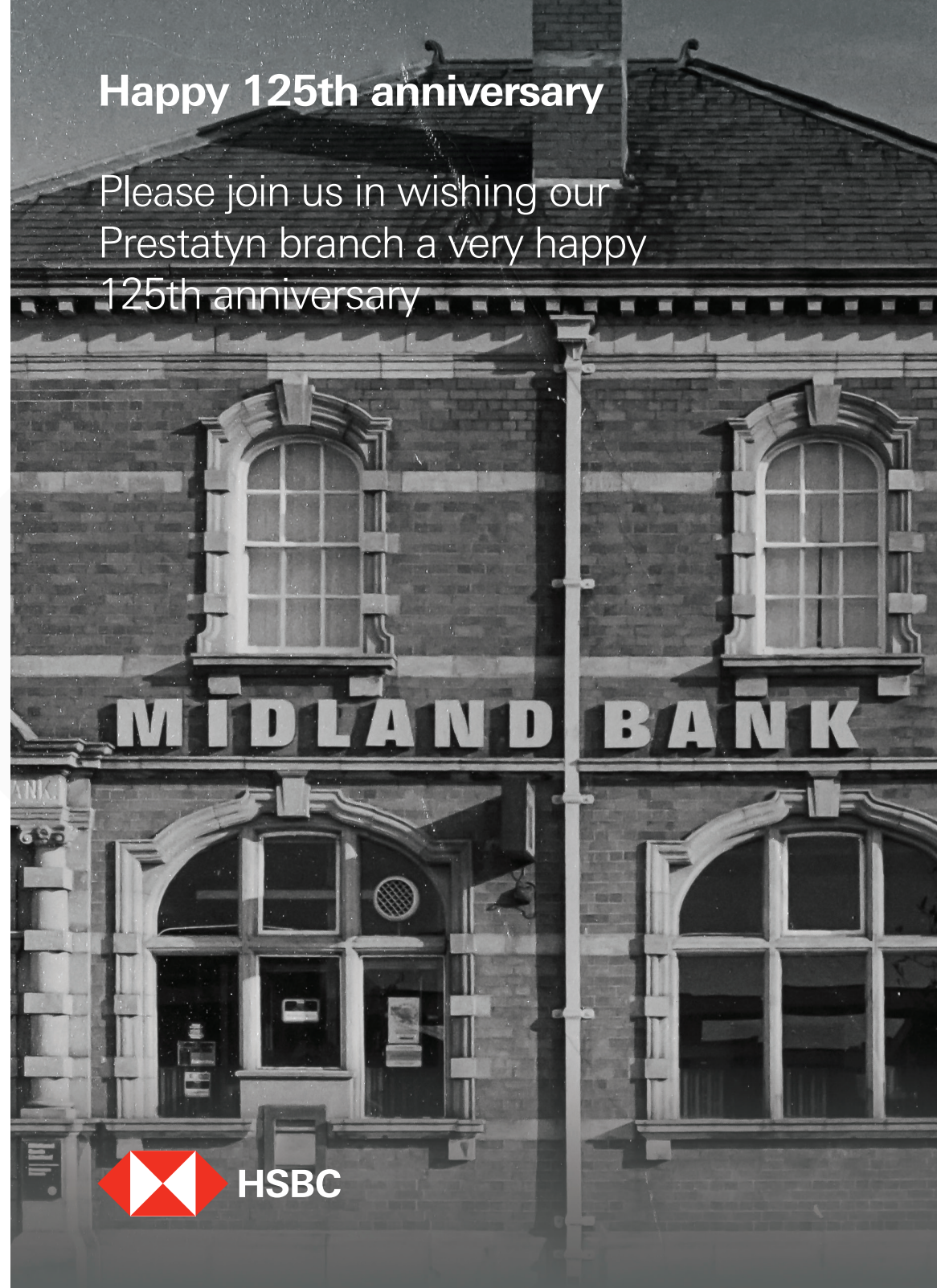
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Further Information: HSBC Archives, 8 Canada Square, London, E14 5HQ

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Happy 125th anniversary

Please join us in wishing our
Prestatyn branch a very happy
125th anniversary



The Story of our Prestatyn branch

2019 marks the 125th anniversary of HSBC's Prestatyn branch

The Prestatyn branch was opened by the North and South Wales Bank in 1894. This bank was a highly successful institution, operating more than 70 branches throughout the region at this time. It had been established in Liverpool in 1836, with high ambitions to build an extensive network across Wales. The provisional committee was comprised of mostly merchants, manufacturers and businessmen from Liverpool, with the city then widely seen as "the commercial metropolis of North Wales". Six branches in North Wales were soon opened, and plans were created for extension of the business in South Wales. Between 1865 and 1898, the bank was at the peak of its success and this was primarily due to the excellent leadership of the chairman George Rae, who was considered the 'doyen of country bankers'.

However, this run of success was not destined to last long. Rae retired in 1898, and in the decade following his departure, Liverpool was struck by crises in the cotton trade; the bank was severely impacted by the downturn. Furthermore, despite its regional success, the North and South Wales Bank could not compete with the larger London-based banks that were rapidly acquiring nationwide coverage of the banking scene. During this turbulent time, numerous institutions approached the North and South Wales Bank

with offers to acquire its business, but it was not until 1908 that the firm finally accepted a bid by Midland Bank (now HSBC UK).

Midland Bank had also been established in 1836. Initially based in Birmingham, it had spread throughout the Midlands before going on to acquire rivals up and down the country, including City Bank in London. Now its focus turned to the North and South Wales Bank with its impressive network of 108 branches. The final offer consisted of more than £2 million in shares and cash, with Midland receiving £11 million to its deposits in return. Prestatyn now became a part of a growing nationwide network.

Located on the high street, the branch's first manager was Hugh Hughes. Hughes had joined the North and South Wales Bank in 1873, beginning at Head Office and then working at several other branches across Wales throughout his career. When he became the manager at Prestatyn, he was joined by an apprentice Herbert Williams who was on a salary of £100 per annum. Hughes remained in this role when the North and South Wales Bank was bought by Midland Bank in 1908, and continued on until 1922, when he was replaced by Richard Williams.

Did you know

- ◆ The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation was the inspiration of Thomas Sutherland, then the Hong Kong Superintendent of the Peninsular and Oriental Steam Navigation Company.
- ◆ In Hamadan, Iran the manager of the Imperial Bank of Persia branch (now HSBC Bank Middle East) turned his branch into a famine relief centre when fighting, bad weather and speculation caused major food shortages in northern Iran in 1918.
- ◆ HSBC's hexagon symbol was developed from the bank's house flag: a white rectangle divided diagonally to produce a red hourglass shape. Many Hong Kong companies established in the nineteenth century were set up by Scottish expatriates, and like many other company flags of that era, the design is thought to be based on the Scottish flag, the cross of St Andrew.
- ◆ In 1952 the Manhattan Savings Bank (later part of HSBC) opened a new office on Madison Avenue. The bank did not want to spend huge amounts of money on advertising and media coverage. So instead the bank's President hit upon the idea of attracting potential customers through the front door with in-bank entertainment. Performers included cartoonists and magicians as well as the installation of comfortable sofas in the banking hall. Huge queues quickly formed around the building and 100,000 people visited the bank in just two days.
- ◆ HSBC has been issuing bank notes in Hong Kong since its inception in 1865 and has also played a pioneering role in introducing paper money into some of the countries in which it operates.
- ◆ 2005 saw HSBC become the first carbon-neutral bank in the world, with its global operations contributing zero net carbon dioxide into the atmosphere.
- ◆ Sir Thomas Jackson was the chief manager of the bank at the turn of the twentieth century and helped to develop HSBC into the foremost financial institution in Asia during that period. He was so well known across Asia – a letter addressed simply 'T J, China' was sent from London for a bet – and subsequently arrived safely on his desk at HSBC without delay or question.

A Global History



Your branch's history forms part of HSBC's global heritage. HSBC is one of the largest banking and financial services organisations in the world and has a unique international pedigree. The bank opened its doors for business in Hong Kong in 1865. It focused on the finance of international trade and quickly established a network of branches in ports throughout Asia and into Europe and the US. Its reputation grew as it began providing financial support and loans to Asian countries, and by the early twentieth century it was the foremost financial institution in the East. The Second World War saw the majority of branches occupied but the bank survived thanks to its

reserves and to a timely, temporary, move of head office to London. In the changed post-war world the bank sought new opportunities for expansion as its China market contracted. Acquisitions in the 1950s in the Middle East and India began the transformation of HSBC into a truly international business - the purchase of Midland Bank in the UK in 1992 signalled a step change in this process with the move of its Head Office to London. In the twenty-first century HSBC's diversification and its core values of financial strength and stability have stood it in good stead in the recent global turbulence in economies and markets, and it remains well placed to deal with an uncertain world.

The First World War was a challenging time for the bank, with over 4,000 men leaving their posts to join His Majesty's forces. Hughes saw two of his employees, John Jones and Ivor Morgan, leave Prestatyn to serve their country. Whilst Morgan returned from the war safely, sadly this was not the case for John Jones. Jones had started at the branch in 1914, leaving two years later to join the armed forces. He trained at Kimmel Camp in Derbyshire, before serving in France where he was reported to have been killed in action. He was sorely missed by his colleagues in Prestatyn, who noted that his loss was very much regretted "as he was a promising hand".

War would break out again in 1939. David Davies was now branch manager and had the difficult task of continuing normal operations during the conflict. He was able to draw on a long experience with the bank. He had stepped up to become deputy manager whilst at Welshpool, before a short stint at Ruabon. His travels then took him to Knighton, where he oversaw the branch's affairs for a couple of years. He was on the move yet again in June 1939 to take up the managerial role at Prestatyn.

The wartime staff registers tell us that seven of his employees enlisted with the armed forces. A number of them joined up in the early years; but Stanley Costley, for example, was just 12 years old as the conflict began. He joined the bank in July 1944, one of the many young men recruited by Midland Bank at this stage of the war to bolster staff numbers. The registers indicate that he left Prestatyn to serve his country in August 1945 - just a month before VE Day. Happily, the records suggest all of the men who left the branch survived and most of them returned to their jobs in 1946.

During this period, there was also an upsurge in female employment across the bank. The absence of the male staff during the war had a significant impact on Midland Bank's operations and this led them to employ more women. Training centres were created across the country to provide crash courses for female staff in the skills that they would need to become cashiers, securities clerks and accountants. By the end of the war, women were almost exclusively manning the cashiers' desks and were undertaking work normally assigned to male members of staff, such as securities, foreign exchange and overseeing the safes and strongrooms. The staff registers tell us that during the Second World War, eight women worked at the Prestatyn branch.

In the years after the war, banking was still heavily focused inside the branch in the 1950s, with the vast majority of transactions conducted onsite rather than in centralised processing centres. Banking records continued to be paper-based, with staff relying on manual typewriters, ledger-posting machines and hand-written reference cards. As the twentieth century progressed, life at the Prestatyn branch gradually began to transform, especially as new technologies were introduced during the 1960s and the accounts at Prestatyn were computerised on 5 October 1972.

Today, customers at Prestatyn continue to access a wide variety of services in the branch, from discussing mortgage options to opening a savings account. Transactions, such as cashing cheques and arranging for the payment of bills, can still be carried out at the counter or via express self-service machines, whilst the advent of mobile, online and telephone banking offers even more choice when it comes to managing money in the twenty-first century.



The branch experience

At the time of the branch's opening in Prestatyn in 1894, banking would have been a markedly different customer experience to what we have come to expect today. Opening hours were designed to coincide with local market days. Very few branches began to open daily until the mid-twentieth century. On entering the branch, customers would have approached a line of clerks standing behind a counter surrounded by large ledger books that would be used to record the day's business.

The range of services tended to be limited to providing businesses with advice and small loans; receiving deposits; authorising withdrawals and cashing cheques. At this time if a customer wanted to make a withdrawal from their account, their signature would be taken and carefully checked in several ledger books which held a copy of every single customer's signature.

At the end of every day all the various books would be meticulously inspected to ensure that every penny that came into and left the branch was accounted for. This would sometimes mean that staff had to stay in the branch many hours after closing time if the manager was not satisfied that the day's accounts added up.



"We begin the new year in a better position, our constituency is growing, and there is no doubt that we shall continue to grow as we have done in the past."

Manager of Harrogate branch reporting to Head Office in 1887.



"Be liberal in your lending and meet every legitimate demand you can"

Sir Edward Holden, Chairman, to his branch managers upon the outbreak of the First World War in 1914.

The world's largest bank

By the end of the First World War, in which 40% of the bank's workforce served in the armed forces, Midland's customers had access to over 1,400 branches. The bank was also beginning to become a force in international banking and developed into the biggest bank in the world at that time. In the 1920s and 1930s Midland sought new business by expanding the branch network, especially in fast-growing metropolitan and suburban areas. The Second World War halted this growth and brought widespread destruction to the branch network, with over 1,350 reports of damage.



Post-war innovation

The bank's post-war history is dominated by innovation in the range of banking services it provided. Gift Cheques, introduced in 1955 were the first of their kind in the UK. Midland also became the first British bank to advertise on television in 1956. Soon afterwards, in 1958, it became the first bank to offer non-secured personal loans which added to its reputation as a trend setter. This innovation was to continue for the rest of the century, another example coming in 1989 when the bank launched first direct. It was the UK's first telephone bank with no branches. It offered a full range of banking products and services from current accounts to mortgages through its telephone lines which were always open, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



Part of a global group

In 1992 HSBC Holdings plc acquired full ownership of Midland Bank, in one of the largest acquisitions in banking history. Midland was renamed HSBC Bank plc in 1999. In 2015 a new brand – HSBC UK – was announced and the bank celebrated the ground-breaking ceremony for a new headquarters to be built in Birmingham, where the story had begun back in 1836.

A History of HSBC UK

The early years

Birmingham was a remarkable hive of business enterprise in the early nineteenth century. The region was the homeland of the industrial revolution, with Birmingham as its centre of employment and finance. Initially the banking needs of the confident business community were served by private firms of bankers but, especially after the banking crisis of 1825-26, these firms were desperately seeking a more secure financial platform provided by a joint-stock bank (one that is owned by its shareholders as opposed to the bankers themselves). It was in these demanding conditions that the Midland Bank first opened for business in Union Street, Birmingham, on Monday 22 August 1836.

The early decades of Midland's life were a testing period in English banking with several regional and nationwide economic crises. Fortunately the bank emerged from this time with a strong and loyal customer base. Under the leadership of its founder, Charles Geach, Midland developed lasting connections with major industrial and commercial houses in the West Midlands region. By the 1850s it could count railway companies, iron founders, utilities and municipal corporations amongst its corporate customers.

A regional powerhouse

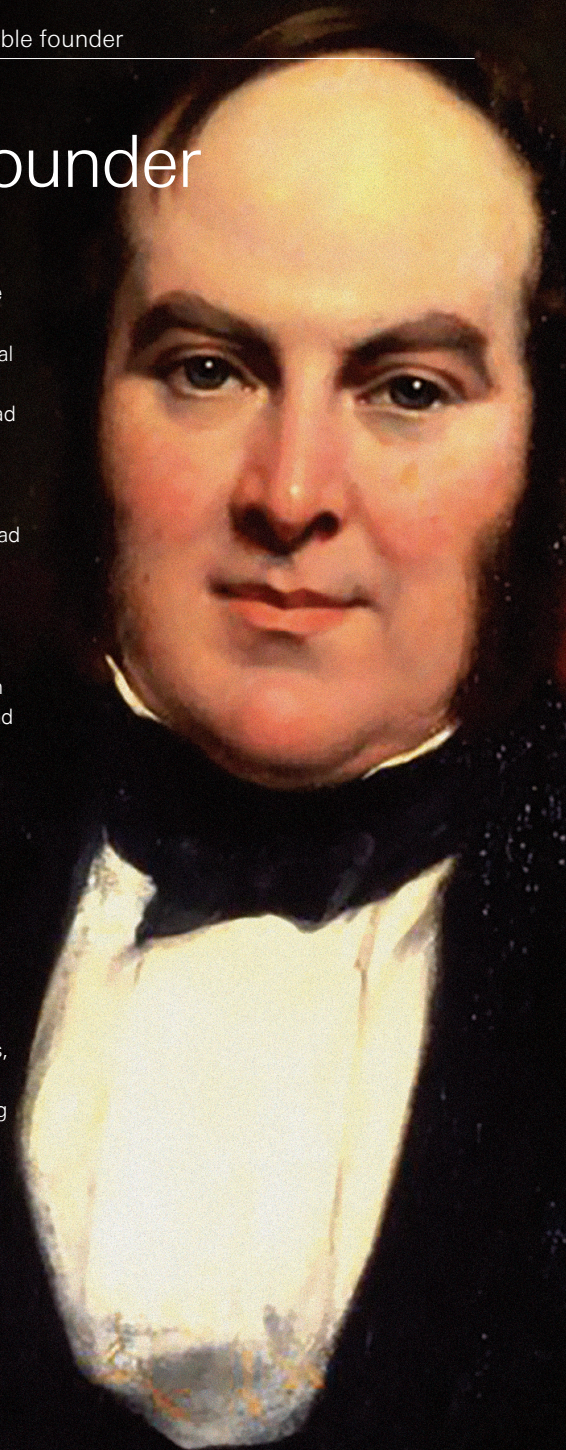
The bank acquired its first branch in 1851 when it purchased the Stourbridge Old Bank. Some years later, when an industrial and financial depression overtook Birmingham in 1878-79, the bank decided to broaden its customer base and began to open new branches and acquire rival banks across the region. This expansion continued in the 1890s when the directors moved Midland's headquarters to London. Under the direction of Edward Holden, who would later become managing director and chairman, the bank conducted a succession of amalgamations.



A remarkable founder

The foundation of Midland Bank was down to the efforts of one 28 year old Bank of England clerk, Charles Geach. Geach was a remarkable individual whose story is as notable as the history of the bank he founded. In 1831 the Bank of England had promoted Geach to the post of Second Inspector at their branch in Birmingham. However, he soon became frustrated by the lack of meritocracy and opportunity within the organisation. He already had good contacts in the local business community as he had assisted in the establishment of a local joint stock bank, the Birmingham Town and District Bank, in 1836. When this bank failed to appoint Geach as its manager, he joined forces with another group of businessmen and founded Midland Bank later the same year. On this occasion, he was appointed as the bank's manager.

Geach's business acumen was widely regarded to have helped the young bank to survive the turbulent economic conditions of the 1840s and 1850s. Aside from his financial nous, he was also prepared to defend the business he founded. During the Birmingham Bull Ring Riots of 1839 a mob threatened to attack the bank. Geach sent his staff to the roof, armed with stones and bricks, whilst he rode through the mob to fetch support from the nearby barracks – thus his quick thinking saved the day.



Happy 125th anniversary

1836

The foundation of the North and South Wales Bank.



1894

The opening of the Prestatyn branch of the North and South Wales Bank.

The Prestatyn branch opened in 1894 and the first manager was Hugh Hughes



1908

The North and South Wales Bank is acquired by Midland Bank.

In 1908 an agreement was signed by The North and South Wales Bank to amalgamate with Midland Bank (now HSBC UK)



1907

Midland employs its first female member of staff

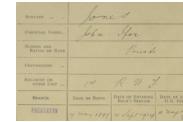
Miss Anne Tulloch becomes the bank's first female employee



1914-1918

Prestatyn staff serve their country in the First World War

The HSBC Archives staff registers show that two employees from the Prestatyn branch left to join the war effort. The war card for one of the men, John Jones, is shown here.



1958

Midland Bank becomes the first British bank to offer non-secured personal loans

Such was the success of the loans, the then Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, wrote to the Midland's chairman commenting: "You certainly put the cat among the pigeons. I shall send my application in due course."



1992

Midland Bank becomes a wholly owned member of the HSBC Group.

In one of the largest acquisitions in banking history Midland becomes part of the HSBC Group. In 1999 it is renamed HSBC Bank plc.

1989

Launch of a new concept in banking

Midland launches first direct in October 1989. It is the first business to offer a person-to-person telephone banking service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.



1972

The Prestatyn branch is computerised on 5 October 1972

From 1972 onwards banking transactions made at the Prestatyn branch are stored on computers rather than paper



2015

HSBC UK announces its plan to relocate back to the city of Birmingham.

Our timeline

The Hongkong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) is established

The bank opens its first office in Hong Kong, followed soon after with premises in Shanghai and London.



HSBC issues China's first public loan

HSBC issues China's first public loan – the 'Foochow' loan. Thereafter, it is involved in the issue of nearly all of China's public loans. The loans are for major infrastructure projects such as railway construction, and other developments such as shipping and coal mines.



HSBC's famous lions make their first appearance

The pair of bronze lions are unveiled at the opening of the bank's newly-built Shanghai office. They became so popular that two lion sculptures can be found guarding many of the HSBC offices around the world today.



HSBC returns to Hong Kong

During the war HSBC had been forced by the occupying authorities to issue banknotes. These 'duress notes' are honoured in full by the bank after the war. This action is credited as a key factor in sustaining the territory's economy in the immediate post-war years.

HSBC acquires the Mercantile Bank and The British Bank of the Middle East

These purchases extended the bank's network across the Indian sub-continent and Middle East, helping to increase HSBC's global reach.



HSBC Holdings plc becomes the parent company of the Group



HSBC Holdings plc launches HSBC and the hexagon symbol as its worldwide brand.

