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HSBC UK ROMFORD BRANCH CELEBRATES 100 YEARS OF SERVING THE TOWN

HSBC UK's Romford branch is celebrating its 100th anniversary since the bank first opened its doors for business at 9 Market Place.

The branch, which opened on the 5th February 1920, where it still stands today, has a fascinating history over the last century, with rapid expansion and employees playing a full part in second World War, with members of staff joining the war effort.

The branch, originally opened as part of the Midland Bank, formally opened its doors with branch manager Walter Gray, who had previously worked at the bank's Tooley Street branch in London. Mr Gray was supported by just one other colleague, Sidney Smith for two years until the branch's third employee, Frank Hancock, joined two years later. Business grew slowly but steadily, supporting an increasing customer base, and by 1939 the branch employed a total of 14 people.

With the onset of the Second World War halting the branch's growth, the then branch manager, Lionel Warnes, ensured the residents of Romford could still access banking services during this extremely difficult time, including recruiting two additional members of staff.

Eight men from the branch left to enlist into the Forces, with all returning safely to rejoin their colleagues when peacetime arrived. Sadly, Lionel Warnes died in the intervening period and was replaced by Louis Holiday, who jointly managed the Romford branch in addition to overseeing the Westcliff, Hamlet Court Road branch.

With so many men across the bank's network leaving their branches to join the war effort, employing female members of staff across the bank and over the course of the war became commonplace.

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 cashier's desks and were undertaking work normally assigned to male members of staff, such as securities, foreign work and overseeing the safes and strongrooms.

Dean Carpenter, manager HSBC UK's Romford branch, who has been at the branch since January 2019 and with the bank for 30 years, said: "I am extremely proud to be leading the branch team at such a momentous time. Celebrating 100 years of the branch being open in this fantastic town has given us the opportunity to review some important historic events.

"We have also had time to appreciate how our branch has adapted to rapidly changing consumer habits and technology over the years. While today, the majority of our banking is done with a click of a button, where customers can keep a very close eye on their finances wherever they are in the world, they are still able to discuss our mortgage and savings options here in the branch. We are very proud to be part of a branch which has been at the centre of change in banking in the 21st century, but even more proud to continue to be providing a first class service for those in Romford who use the branch."



Romford branch celebrating the 100th anniversary of the branch opening its doors in the town, alongside a celebratory cake and items from the bank's archives.



100th birthday cake depicting the branch in 1920 and 2020.



Members of branch staff outside the Romford branch.

Media enquiries to:

Steve Gracey, HSBC UK Press Office: 020 7991 4118 / steve.gracey@hsbc.com

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