



October 7, 2019

## 70 years ago, the United Kingdom handed over trusteeship of Volkswagen to the Federal Republic of Germany

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- The federal government assigned responsibility for the management of Volkswagenwerk GmbH to the state of Lower Saxony
  - The British Military Government saved the Wolfsburg plant from demolition in 1945
  - REME Major Ivan Hirst turned a ruined armaments factory into a functioning plant for the production of the VW Beetle
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**Wolfsburg – 70 years ago, on October 8, 1949, the British Military Government handed over trusteeship of Volkswagenwerk GmbH to the Federal Republic of Germany. The young West German state, which had only been founded shortly before with the promulgation of the Basic Law on May 23, 1949, assigned responsibility for the administration of the company to the state of Lower Saxony.**



**Colonel Charles Radclyffe signed the protocol transferring Volkswagenwerk to the trusteeship of the Federal German government.**

Officer Major Ivan Hirst came to the plant in August and immediately started to establish a functioning automobile plant for the VW Beetle (Type 1) with pragmatism and a farsighted approach.

As a company under British military management, Volkswagenwerk was able to take a pole position from which it was able to start immediately in Germany's nascent automobile society and to become a symbol of West German reconstruction and the German economic miracle.

The British are celebrating the successful mission in Wolfsburg of their predecessors headed by Major Hirst at the present REME headquarters in Lyneham, Wiltshire, in the south of England on October 8. About two weeks ago, Colonel Andy Thorne, CEng, Deputy Chief of Staff British Forces Germany, and Lieutenant Colonel Tony Maw, MBE CEng FSOE, Officer Commanding the Germany Enabling Office, were guests at the works meeting in Wolfsburg. At the meeting, the workforce, employee representatives and management commemorated the

The British had laid the essential foundations for the later global success of the Beetle and of Volkswagen itself when they transferred Volkswagenwerk GmbH and the Wolfsburg plant to German control precisely 70 years ago.

The British Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (REME) were responsible for the Wolfsburg plant from June 1945. Senior Resident

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transfer of Volkswagen to German control 70 years ago together with Stephan Weil, Minister President of Lower Saxony.

**Literature for further research:**

- Historical Notes 8: Changing Lanes under British Command
- Historical Notes 4: Ivan Hirst - British Officer and Manager of Volkswagen's Postwar Recovery

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**About the Volkswagen brand:**

The Volkswagen Passenger Cars brand is present in more than 150 markets throughout the world and produces vehicles at over 50 locations in 14 countries. In 2018, Volkswagen delivered 6,2 million vehicles including bestselling models such as the Golf, Tiguan, Jetta or Passat. Currently, 195,878 people work for Volkswagen across the globe. The brand also has over 10,000 dealerships with 86,000 employees. Volkswagen is forging ahead consistently with the further development of automobile production. E-mobility, smart mobility and the digital transformation of the brand are the key strategic topics for the future.

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