

RONAL History

Pioneer-entrepreneur Karl Roland Wirth started RONAL in 1969. As it mostly happens to pioneers, Wirth's decision to produce wheels was the result of many twists and turns. Wirth was always looking for business ideas that could be interesting and successful. In 1967, this approach led him to sell motor testing material used to adjust carburetors, ignition systems, and so on.



He named his venture RON, an abbreviation of his second name ROlaNd. But competition was harsh and business proved not easy. On his business trips to customers, potential clients were often more mesmerized by the aluminium cast wheels that were mounted on the Opel he was driving at the time than by the testing material he was presenting. The



wheels on his car were mounted by his friend Norbert Oberschmidt who was working at a wheel manufacturer during his time off from university. As it well suits an entrepreneur, Wirth immediately sensed a business opportunity; he started to collect orders for wheels he actually did not even have and bought equipment to machine wheels that were engineered by Oberschmidt. The first wheels that were sand cast by the independent foundry in Weingarten and machined by Karl Wirth in Walldorf were fitted on an Alfa Romeo Duetto in the spring of '69. At the same time RONAL was born, a composition of the existing name **RON** with the first two letters of **AL**uminium, the key material of the RONAL cast aluminium wheel venture. RONAL proved to be the right business for the entrepreneur and the start of a very fruitful adventure. Wirth was a passionate race driver who started his racing career as a Formula V driver in 1966. By 1967, Wirth already had won the ONS Junior Pokal. Given his passion for racing, it should not be very surprising that it was with a business so closely related to cars that Wirth achieved his greatest success.



The orders for RONAL wheels accumulated with such a speed that the supplying foundry could no longer handle the demand. Wirth decided to control all different production steps and built his own factory in Forst, Germany. In October 1970, RONAL moved all production to the Forst factory which was the very first aluminium wheel factory in Germany to house both development and production. The first cast permanent mould wheel was delivered by RONAL on December 10th of that same year.



In September of 1971, RONAL received its first Original Equipment order from Ford AVO in Cologne. Already in 1974, RONAL produced over 100.000 wheels in only one year and four years later, by 1978, RONAL's overall production surpassed 1 million. In 1976, RONAL opened a second wheel factory in Saint Avold, France and in 1981 another factory was opened in Teruel, Spain. The production milestone of 1 million was reached in 1984.

In December 1987, RONAL's German operations expanded when a factory in Landau opened up. Landau took over all production in 2003 when the foundry in Forst was closed down. By 1988, over 10 million wheels were produced in RONAL history and by 2000, the overall production of RONAL wheels exceeded 50 million. Over the years, other production facilities were opened up to meet the growing wheel demand, and some others were closed down in order to better organize and structure. One of the first major expansion efforts was the opening of the American Die Cast Engineering (ADCE) in Huntington Beach, USA in April 1978. In August 1983, RONAL expanded to Haerkingen, Switzerland under the name RON AG. RONAL Canada was founded in Stevensville in March 1987. By July 1990, a mould factory was opened in Cantanhede, Portugal. When in March 1993, RONAL opened a factory in Jicin, Czech Republic, the eastward expansion of RONAL became a fact. Two years later, in 1995, Poland became a part of RONAL activities with the foundation of a factory in Waldenburg. In 1999, RONAL reinforced its transatlantic operations by opening a factory in Queretaro, Mexico and most recently, in 2001, the company intensified its presence in Poland by opening a second factory in Jelz. The latest and most remarkable development was the acquisition of the majority of Speedline Italy, in May 2007.

August 15th 1991 is marked as a black day in RONAL history, when its founder Karl Roland Wirth tragically died at age 54 in a car accident between Prague and Pilsen in the Czech Republic. Despite the death of its founder, RONAL consists of a very loyal and strong team that has the all-encompassing goal to extend operations and make the company thriving. Future success is guaranteed for a company that has such a highly interesting and varied clientele worldwide including Ford (since 1971),

Opel (1973), Saab(1977), Audi (1978), Nissan (1979), VW (1983), Rolls Royce and Bentley (1984), General Motors USA (1985), Mercedes Benz (1987), Toyota (1990), Seat (1992), Skoda and Renault (1993), Porsche (1994), and BMW (2000).