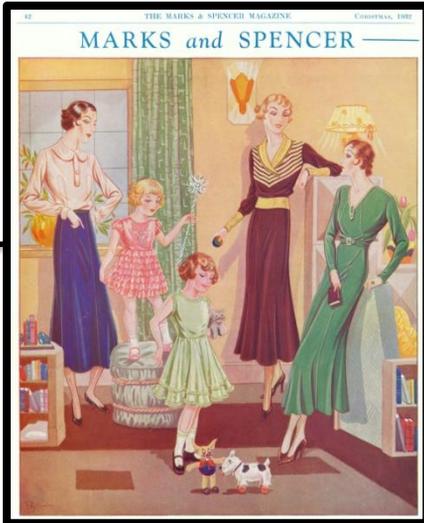


M&S: Womenswear

How M&S has dressed generations of women from head to toe



Advert from 'The Marks and Spencer Magazine', Christmas 1932

1920s

The 1920s saw the introduction of womenswear, including knitwear, artificial silk dresses and lingerie.

1930s

By the 1930s we were selling smart separates and overalls for busy housewives, along with glamorous, dressing gowns, 'party frocks' and knitted swimming suits.



Textile Design Department, Head Office, Baker Street, 1930s

1936

A central design department is established to keep up to date with fashion trends, employing Parisian designers as consultants.



Printed dresses in a store window, 1937

1938

We begin buying printed fabric designs from Paris studios – described by M&S director Harry Sacher as 'Really genuine designs, produced by a Paris artist'.



Green rayon crepe dress, c1944,
Ref: T1941/51

1941-1945

Our technologists helped develop Utility clothing standards, a set of rules for dressmakers under the Civilian Clothing Act of 1941, to ensure garment quality remained high and fabric wasn't wasted.

We were able to produce a range of Utility clothing that was not only functional and hardwearing but stylish.

1946

After the war the primary concern of our technologists was to develop new fabrics to help make good design available to everyone.

A new textile laboratory opened to explore nylons, plastics and other synthetic materials, resulting in man-made fabrics that were easy-wash, easy-care and fade-resistant.



M&S Technology Laboratory, c1950

1947

Christian Dior's first collection 'La Ligne Corolle' shown in Paris. Dubbed the 'New Look' by the press, it featured fully pleated skirts and nipped-in waists and remained very influential throughout the 1950s.

'New Look' style dresses at M&S combined the latest silhouette with new easy-care man-made fabrics such as our own 'Marspun'.

As demand for parachutes decreases and nylon becomes more available, we are able to produce our first nylon blouse.



Nylon blouse, c1950, Ref: T43/41



Nylon dress with belt, c1955, Ref: T50/22

1953

The launch of our first petite range 'for the shorter woman'. M&S employees were asked to come up with a name for the new range, with a chance to win 5 guineas!

St Michael News
No 1. MARKS & SPENCER LTD. JUNE 1953

SHORTER WOMAN SPECIAL

NOW M & S REMEMBERS THE SHORTER WOMAN

TWENTY STORES PLAN

NEW SIZE RANGES FOR HER IN MARSPUN at 27s. 11d.

DETAILS of the new Shorter Woman Size range, given in this issue, show it to be a line of merchandise likely to appeal to a considerable cross-section of the Marks and Spencer buying public.

Twenty top stores initially are to receive a new range of sizes for the shorter woman together with extensive publicity material.

The decision to enter the smaller woman field follows many requests from members of the public, and is in line with the recently discovered fact that the majority of British women are five foot two or under.

WHAT'S in a name?
If it's the right one, five guineas. This is what's involved, no one has so far been able to think of a really good name for the new "Shorter Woman" range, and you can win five guineas if you can think of one.

you can win five guineas

It's to be a word or phrase which flatters the vast group of women who are five foot two or under. Hence the search for a new crisp, neat, and to the point, short phrase—we will award a prize of five guineas. Suggestions to: Sales Development, Michael House, Baker Street, London, W.1.

The range is graded in all its measurements and styled for the shorter woman in ten-age, small women's, women's and WX sizes.

"A woman's dress condensed" is one description, and it is a very good one. There has been no skimping or unnecessary economy on these dresses. They have all the selling points and qualities of the normal printed Marspun range, on a smaller scale!

There is a range of a dozen styles, but the bodice and the skirt have been scaled down. The accessories too, generally, are smaller.

Designed to fit from shoulder to waist, the general effect is of neatness, and of a compact, dainty fashion-conscious creation. The department is confident that the range is broad enough—and attractive enough—to

(turn to page 2, col. 3)

*** KEEPING IN THE PICTURE** with our new Shorter Woman range, this fashion-conscious young lady knows that her dress has been modelled to make a compact, dainty creation, matched to her figure and posture.

1956

Our textile research laboratory conducted its first size survey: 'A Scientific Approach to Stocking Sizes'. The survey was based on 600 women and led to a range of 'super-fit tailored' nylons.



M&S product testing, 1957

1958

In our first colour advert, we promoted the company as a fashion brand with a four page spread of specially commissioned photography in 'Woman' magazine, showing that the 'New Look' style was still very influential.

Earlier the same year, as skirts became shorter, all our skirt lengths were reduced by an inch.

Shorter still!

All skirt contracts have been altered to make the two lengths 28" and 30" instead of 29" and 31". If this fashion craze for shorter skirts continues, our skirts may be made even shorter this autumn—27" and 29".

St Michael News, March 1958

MARKS & SPENCER

St Michael
DRESSES, BLOUSES & SKIRTS pictured here are examples of the beautiful variety of ever-changing ranges that await you at MARKS & SPENCER. You will find something new every time you visit your favourite MARKS & SPENCER—new cloths, new prints, new styles—drawn by our designers from the fashion centres of the world.

St Michael BLOUSES in a great variety of styles and gay colours, prints and embroidery. COTTONS 16/11 to 25/-.
NYL-DE-CHINE with beautiful embroideries 25/- and 27/6.

St Michael SKIRTS in the new fashion lengths. COTTONS in many lovely designs 29/11 and SAILCLOTH in colours that glow 25/11 & 35/-.

PERMANENTLY PLEATED in miracle fibres—TERYLENE AND WORSTED in many new pleatings 55/-.
TRICEL BLENDS 29/11 & 40/-.

See the full range of *St Michael* fashions & children's

M&S colour supplement in 'Woman' magazine, May 1958



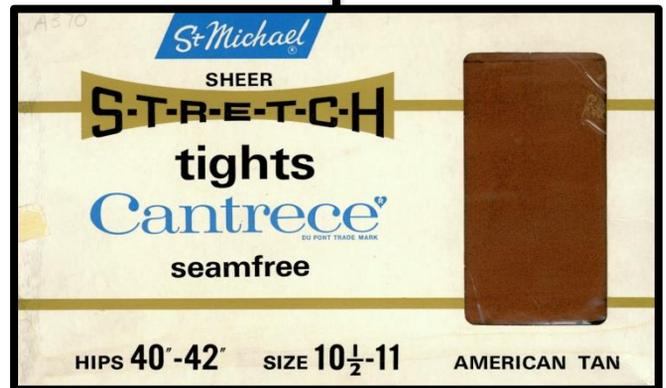
St Michael News, 1965

1960s

An increasing number of women were now going out to work. We produced stylish yet comfortable clothes to wear at the office.

1962

The changing fashion for shorter hemlines contributed to the successful trialling of tights by M&S. By the end of the 1960s, tights were much more popular than stockings.



Sheer stretch tights in American Tan, 1960s, Ref: T60/11



Hans Schneider and Michael, 1965

1962

Womenswear in the 1960s was heavily influenced by our consultant – Michael of Carlos Place, employed by the Design Department's Hans Schneider in 1962. Michael was seen by *The Times* as the most 'perfectionist of London designers' and in 1966 M&S made it into their 'Absolutely In' list.

Fashions for Spring and Summer 1967

St-Michael®
SPREADS
ITS
WINGS

International women are clamouring for St. Michael merchandise. Already St. Michael have made great fashion hits in more than sixty countries and now Marks & Spencer have created a Spring and Summer range that will be much sought after the world over. Styles are fluid and feminine for the young and the mature. Colours vibrate and complement with lilac, orange and coral red strongly to the fore, for next year. Trendsetters - well above have level for the young go-ahead, have-dominating for the over 30's. The care of these new, swinging styles presents no problem either, they all come in easy-care, easy-wash and easy-iron fabrics, vital qualities for the women of this racy, pacy age. Simplicity of styling and colour, cut and fabric are the salient pointers in this range. These clothes are designed to complement all types of women. Following is a preview of the St. Michael mood of 1967.

Sleeveless bustled shift in 'Courtelle' with corolla collar, etc. etc.



M&S fashion supplement, 1966, Ref: ACC/11/348

1972

We announce our first machine-washable lambswool and Shetland wool garments.



St Michael News, September 1979

1966

An emerging teen market resulted in ranges 'designed to suit the tastes and figures of the in-betweens'.

Twiggy makes her first appearance modelling for M&S. Shown here in a dress with a hemline 'well above the knee for the young go-ahead'.



Machine washable wool and nylon vest, May 1974, ref: T69/22

1979

The launch of 'Miss Michelle', a clothing range aimed at the growing teenager and young-adult market.



The DALLAS look

EXECUTIVE dressing has come to M&S to add the Dallas touch to your wardrobe. Designed for smart 'day into evening' wear, these two outfits from the lightweight sets and dresses departments are available in selected stores next month. "The garments epitomise the broad-shouldered, slim hipped look favoured by 'Dallas' and 'Dynasty' and if our two outfits are successful, we will be carrying the look forward for spring" said lightweight sets assistant selector, Tracey Kyle. Tops are priced £27.50, skirts £19.99 and the dress, pictured right, is £45.



St Michael News, Dec 1985

1980s

Designers such as Betty Jackson and Bruce Oldfield enlisted as consultants to develop our classic womenswear ranges.

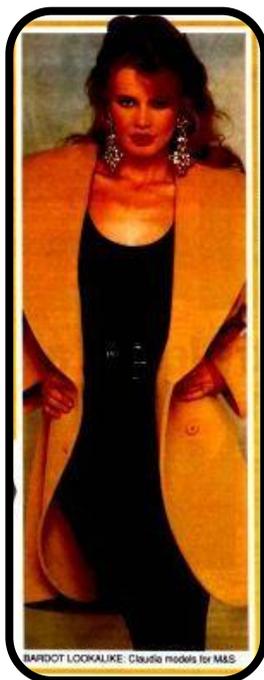
Power dressing and 'Dallas' inspired shoulder-pads feature heavily.

1987

Launch of a dedicated Plus range for women up to size 24, later 28, and a Maternity Range offering both a formal working wardrobe as well as casual garments and nightwear.



St Michael News, Jan 1987



St Michael News, Jul 1990

1990

The first model of superstar status – Claudia Schiffer – is introduced to our print advertising campaigns. Other campaigns later include Linda Evangelista and Yasmin Le Bon.

2000s

New sub-brands help customers find a style that suits their taste and budget.

The Autograph range was launched in 2000, with contributions from designers such as Katherine Hamnett and Julien Macdonald. 2001 saw the launch of the per una range, known for its detailing, whilst the trend-led Limited Collection range was launched in 2004 with Helena Christensen as the face of the advertising campaign.



Red kimono dress from the Limited Range, Spring 2007

Trend: Layers of intricately worked lace and panels of embroidery



Your M&S, May 2007

2007

Bridalwear range launched including bridal gowns and bridesmaids' dresses as well as children's outfits and formalwear.



Pink and red jacquard velvet dress, Patricia Field, 2008

2008

We collaborate with designer and stylist Patricia Field on what would become a sell-out collection of iconic womenswear and matching accessories.

2009

We celebrated our 125th anniversary with vintage-inspired limited edition pieces, including a 1940s style grey spotted dress later worn by Samantha Cameron to the Conservative Party Conference.

Prints produced in collaboration with Zandra Rhodes also appear in the 2009 collection.



Orange halterneck jumpsuit,
Zandra Rhodes Collection, 2009



Polka dot dress, 2009, Ref: ACC/13/059



Silver sequin jacket, Twiggy for M&S Collection

2012

After modelling for us for 45 years, Twiggy designed her own collection for M&S. This silver sequin jacket sold out within two hours of going on sale.

2013

The Oversize Duster Coat from the AW13 collection became a sell-out hit. Before the coat was in the shops, our Marble Arch store had a list of 100 customers waiting to be told it was in stock.



Oversize Duster Coat from AW13 collection

The Best of British range was launched in 2013 combining M&S's heritage with modern styling and British manufacturing. Garments are made with premium fabrics from Scottish cashmere through to Yorkshire cloths.

2013-14

2013 also saw the launch of the 'Leading Ladies' advertising campaign, featuring twelve well known British women photographed by Annie Leibovitz.



Leading Ladies, 2014

2016-17

For 2013 the line up included Helen Mirren, Tracy Emin and Darcey Bussell; for 2014 Annie Lennox, Emma Thompson and Rita Ora were among the women featuring in the updated campaign.

We collaborated with author, presenter and model Alexa Chung who explored the archive, discovering classic M&S design. She reinterpreted her favourite pieces from the archive and made them relevant for today. The S/S range included pieces inspired by vintage garments from a 1940s man's shirt, to a 1990s nautical blazer, while A/W took inspiration from garments including a 1970s velvet jacket and a 1930s satin dressing gown.



2017

As well as our show-stopping wedding cakes, this year our Wedding Shop covered everything from bridal lingerie to wedding guest outfits for every occasion. Our range of bridesmaid dresses includes multi-way maxi dresses to suit any figure as well as this delicate lace dress, all available in several coordinating colours.



2018

January 2018 saw the launch of M&S Curve, a new range thoughtfully designed in sizes 18 to 32. The collection was developed using the insights of more than 2000 customers and was designed and developed on a size 24 block (rather than a usual size 12).



2018

We began working with TV Celebrity Holly Willoughby. The new campaign 'Holly's Must Haves' initially featured a 20-piece edit including a sell out navy boiler suit.



Image used in Drapers



Jess, M&S Insider, image taken from Instagram page

2019

We begin using specially selected in-house staff from different stores and departments across the business as media influencers to model and share our clothing via social media.

2019

We launch our 'Best Ever Fit' denim campaign which includes new styles named The Lily, The Ivy, and The Sienna. For the first time we launch denim where 100% of the polyester has been made with recycled plastic, our most sustainable jean yet!

We are the denim market leader (with over 10%) selling over 5 million pairs of women's jeans per year.



'Best Ever Fit' taken from M&S World

2019

We team up with the Duchess of Sussex along with other high street retailers such as John Lewis and Jigsaw to sell workwear items that help support and contribute to Smart Works, a charity designed to support vulnerable and long-term unemployed women back into work.



The Duchess of Sussex, taken from M&S World