

The M&S Story

1884

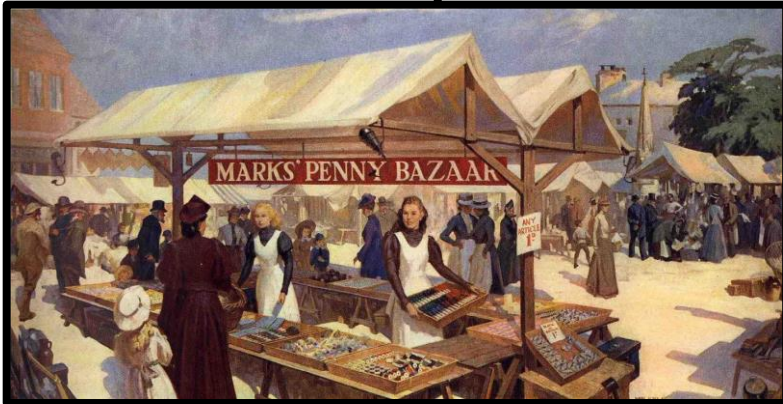
Jewish immigrant Michael Marks arrived in England from Belarus (then Russian Poland) and began working as a pedlar, after he received a loan from Isaac Dewhirst to help with initial start-up costs.



Michael Marks

1884

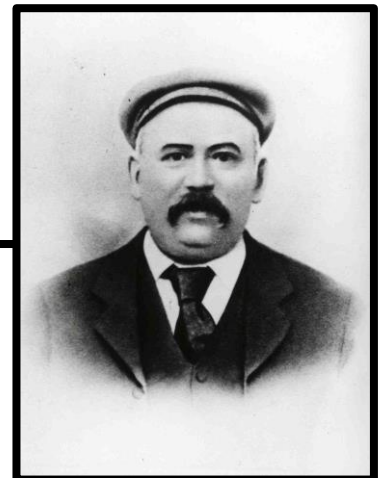
Michael opened his first Penny Bazaar stall at Kirkgate Market in Leeds, and added the slogan 'Don't ask the price, it's a penny' once it became clear that the products priced at a penny were his bestsellers.



Artist Impression of Kirkgate Market, Leeds by Van Jones

1894

Michael decided to look for a partner to help manage his growing business. He initially approached Isaac Dewhirst who recommended Tom Spencer – Isaac's senior cashier. Tom agreed, and on 28th September 1894 Marks & Spencer was born.



Tom Spencer

1894

Tom matched Michael's own investment of £300 and together they continued to expand the business with stalls and stores, naming them Penny Bazaars keeping the penny price slogan and adding the words 'Admission Free'. This was a successful marketing strategy, encouraging customers to browse without any obligation to buy.



Sheffield, The Moor market stall, 1897

1900

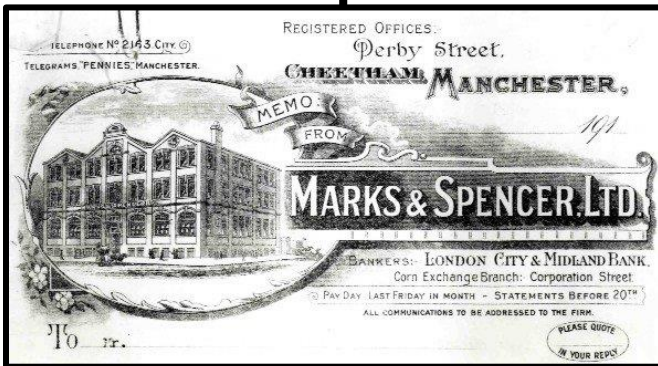
By 1900 Marks & Spencer had expanded to include 12 Penny Bazaar stores and 24 market stalls.



Manchester Oldham Street store, 1898

1901

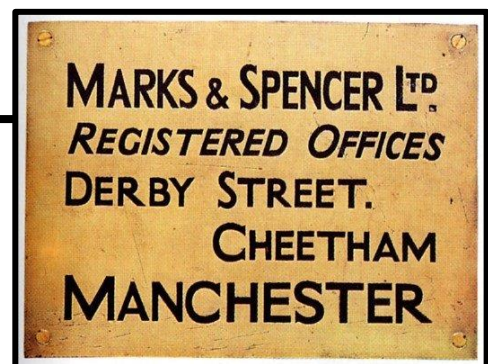
We built a warehouse at Derby Street, Manchester. It was the first property built to our specifications and became the Company's first registered address and headquarters.



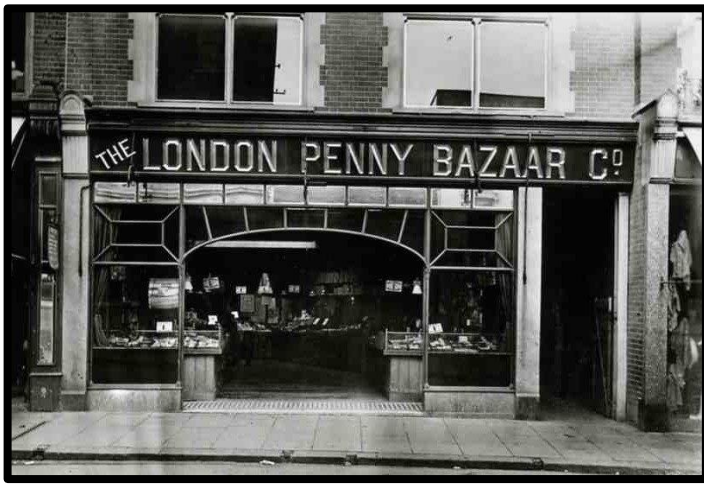
Derby St letterhead, c1910

1903

Marks & Spencer Ltd was registered as a firm with a capital of 30,000 £1 shares. These were split equally between the two founders.



Registered Offices signage



The London Penny Bazaar, Co, Watford

1914

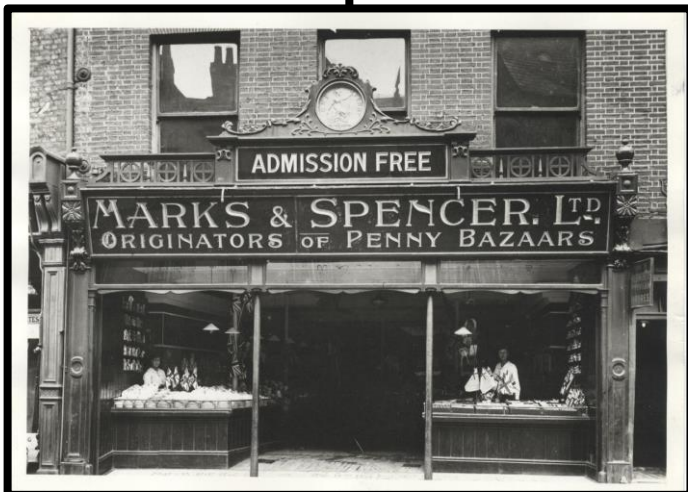
Marks & Spencer bought the London Penny Bazaar Company.

1916

Following the deaths of Tom Spencer in 1905 and Michael Marks in 1907 a lengthy legal battle between Simon Marks and William Chapman began, ending with Simon becoming Chairman in 1916 at the age of 28. Simon was to lead the company for 56 years.



Simon Marks



York store, 1907-1918

1918

The penny pricing continued until the First World War, when goods became expensive and hard to get. Customers really needed the buttons, needles and threads we sold to update their old clothes, so we worked hard to provide the products in demand.



Art Deco design tea cup & saucer, 1920s

1920s

This period saw our products start to reflect customers' changing lifestyles. Demand for affordable household goods grew, so we sold items like decorative tea sets alongside practical products like light bulbs, irons and batteries.

1924

The Company's Head Office and registered address moved from Manchester to London.



Baker Street Head Office, 1930s



Cotton & rayon bra, 1920s

1926

We responded to people's needs in difficult times, selling more of life's essentials, including our first clothing ranges. Since then, the bra has become our most iconic product, with one in three women now wearing one bought from M&S.

1928

The St Michael trademark was introduced in 1928 as a guarantee of quality and value. Initially used only for a small range of textiles made to Marks & Spencer specifications, the St Michael range was extended over the years to cover all goods sold in M&S.

Several other Marks & Spencer brands also existed at this point, including 'Marspen', a range of household goods and children's books – and 'Welbeck', a food range including biscuits and other baked goods.

St Michael trademark, 1928

1931

A food department was introduced selling produce and canned goods. This range was greatly expanded in 1934, and by the outbreak of the Second World War, we were one of the biggest food suppliers in the country.



Fruit display, 1930s

1933

Simon Marks commissioned Flora Solomon to set up an employee welfare service that provided pensions, subsidised employee canteens, health and dental services, hairdressing, rest rooms and camping holidays.



Dymchurch holiday camp 1930s

1934

A Scientific Research Laboratory was established, headed by Dr Eric Kann. This was the first research lab of any British retailer to pre-test garments and research innovative new fabrics. Between 1935 and 1939 the lab carried out over 9000 tests on the wearability, washability and durability of textiles.



Technology Laboratory 1930s



Café Bar, 1940s

1935

Café Bars were introduced, with the first one in Leeds opening in 1935. They provided cheap, hygienic and nutritious mass catering. By 1942 there were 82 Café Bars.

1939

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Marks & Spencer had 234 stores. By 1945, over 100 of these had been damaged by bombs, and 16 had been completely destroyed.



Store damage at Lewisham store, 1944



CC41 garment labels

1941

The advent of clothing rationing and the Utility Clothing Scheme in wartime meant that there were strict specifications on the use of materials and trimmings for all clothing until 1952. One of our scientists helped develop the government scheme to produce a range of quality garments all bearing the 'CC41' logo on the label.

1948

The Food Technology department was established to collaborate with suppliers, producers of raw materials, leading food manufacturers, farmers, Government bodies and research institutes in order to upgrade quality.



Food section, late 1940s



Self service leaflet, 1948

1948

Our first food self-service trial was held at our store in Wood Green, London. Prior to this customers were served from behind counters, but they could now shop in the aisles and browse before selecting their purchases. This was a great success and became the model for all our stores.

1953

We launched our first petite range 'For the Shorter Woman', following research which showed that the majority of women were shorter than the accepted average of 5'5".

Also, this year a new exchange and refund policy was introduced to guarantee instant refunds.

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 now one has to far from able to think of a word good enough for the new 'Shorter Woman' range, and we want you to have a try.

It's to be a word or phrase which forms the first group of women who are five feet two or under. Hence the search for a new title, one which you think, and for the best word of level on short phrase—we will award a prize of five guineas.

Suggestions to: Sales Department, Michael, James, 120, St. Michael Street, London, W.1.

The range is graded in all its measurements and styled for the shorter woman in four-age, small women's, women's and W.X. 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 priced 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

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 pace.

(See p. 2, col. 2)



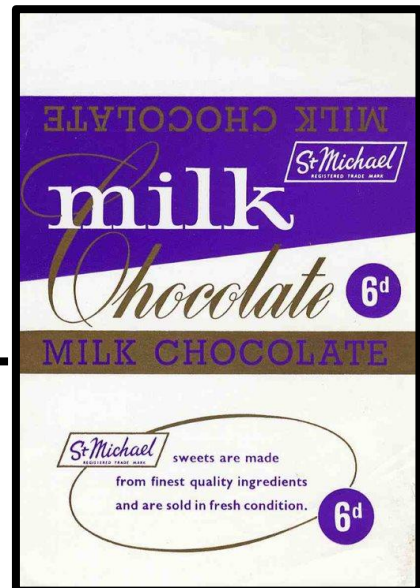
Marspun dresses, Kingston store, 1956

1955

We took a wartime spun rayon fabric and made it into a line of dresses influenced by Parisian designers. This fabric, known as Utility Schedule 1005, was renamed Marspun. Our range of Marspun dresses grew to 340 designs in 2000 colourways!

1956

By 1956 all goods were sold under the St Michael label, including the first St Michael chocolate, introduced this year.



St Michael chocolate packaging, 1950s



Store interior, 1959

1959

We became the first retailer to introduce No Smoking rules in our stores.

1960

The cold-chain process was invented - chickens were chilled straight after slaughter, carried in refrigerated trucks, kept in refrigerated storage, and sold from refrigerated counters giving customers the option of buying a fresh chicken for the first time.



Fresh refrigerated chickens, 1960s

1962

Tights were introduced to our stores for the first time.



Fresh refrigerated chickens, 1960s

1964

Simon Marks died after 56 years of service to M&S. Israel Sieff became Chairman.



Simon Marks

TERYLENE—THE WONDER FABRIC OF THE FUTURE

TERYLENE the wonder fabric is here to stay; the wonder fabric that washes like a dream, that maintains its shape permanently and that dispenses with the iron. But, and the "but" is enormous, present production is only available in very limited quantities, which means only a few stores are lucky.

A man-made fibre manufactured by I.C.I. —Terylene is used for both outer and under wear. Marks & Spencer runs a permanently pleated wool and Terylene skirt, and the pleating is so permanent the garment can be washed and washed without any harm or damage.

The skirt will not lose its shape, nor will it seat; crease resisting, it will always look fresh and crisp.

Terylene has several outstanding advantages; it resists stretching as well as creasing; it is quick drying and most important, it is shrink proof, mothproof and rotproof.

Very strong and hardwearing it will probably never wear out. What qualifications for a smart and practical skirt!

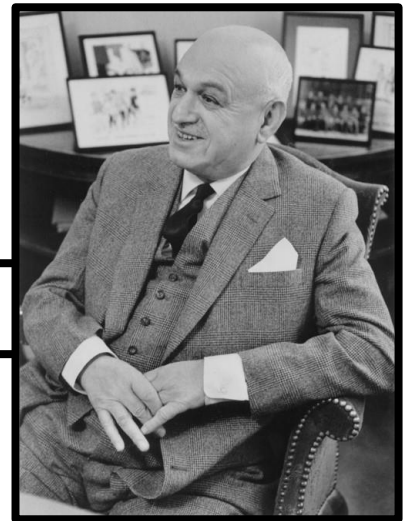
St Michael News, Jan 1955

1967

Israel Sieff retired from the role of Chairman; however he remained on the Board in the role of President and had an active involvement in business affairs. J Edward Sieff, Israel's younger brother, became Chairman.

1966

By 1966 sales of clothes made from synthetic fabrics overtook sales of natural fibres for the first time. This included our range of new 'wonder fabrics' including the synthetic fabric Terylene. A type of polyester, it was very popular because it was so practical and hardwearing.



Israel Sieff



Frozen foods, 1972

1971

Frozen foods including lasagne and pizza were trialed for the first time with home freezers becoming cheaper and more easily available.

1972

Marcus Sieff, son of Israel Sieff, became Chairman.



Marcus Sieff



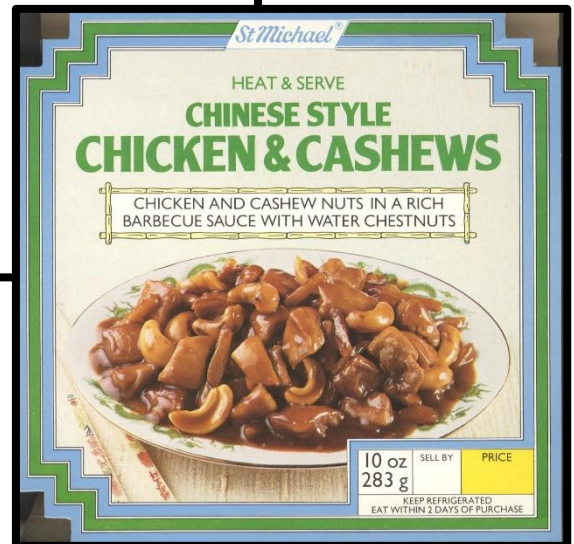
Sell by dates leaflet, 1973

1973

We were the first major retailer to introduce sell-by dates to food as a guarantee of freshness.

1974

Chinese and Indian dishes were introduced; meals included Sweet and Sour Pork, Chicken Korma and Lamb Rogan Josh.



Chinese style chicken & cashews, 1985



M&S store in Paris, 1975

1975

We took our first step into wholly owned stores in Europe, opening an M&S store on Boulevard Haussman in Paris.

1977

Our first fitting rooms were introduced as a trial at Plymouth store. This proved popular, and over the next few years fitting rooms were rolled out to all stores.



Fitting rooms at Dumfries store, c1980



M&S Dublin store, Mary Street, c1980

1979

The first Marks & Spencer store opened in the Republic of Ireland in Mary Street, Dublin.

1979

We launched the Chicken Kiev, which has since become a national favourite.



Chicken Kiev packaging, 1990



Derek Rayner

1985

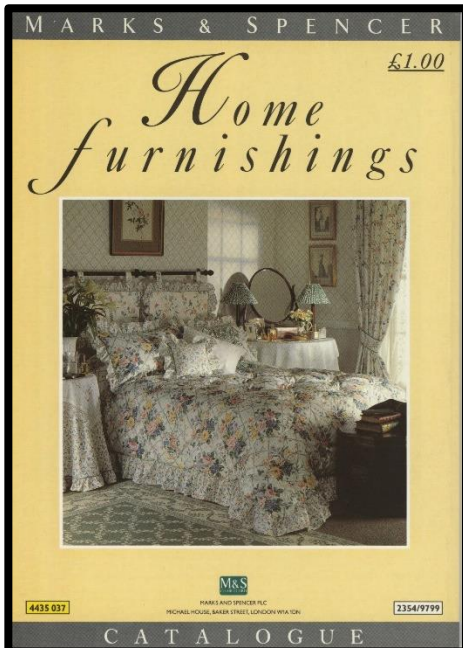
Marcus Sieff retired from the role of Chairman, becoming President of the Company and Lord Derek Rayner took over as Chairman.

1986

Our first edge of town store opened at the Metro Centre in Gateshead.



M&S Metro Centre store, 1990s



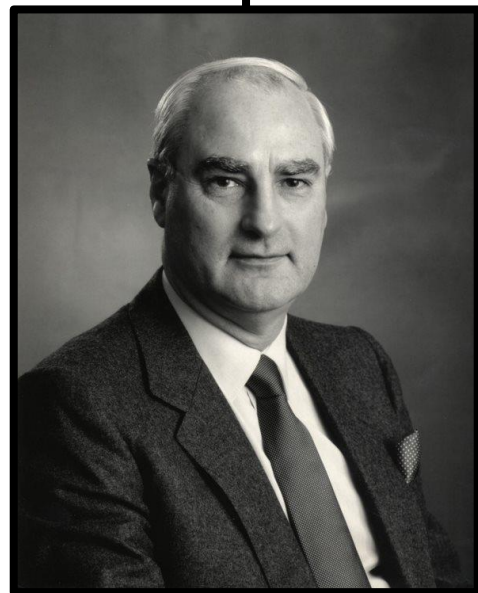
Home furnishings catalogue, 1988

1986

Our first range of furniture was introduced. This was supported by the launch of the Home Furnishings catalogue.

1988

Richard Greenbury became Chief Executive, with Lord Rayner continuing as Chairman.



Richard Greenbury

Bags of help for the environment and your pocket

A VERY strong re-usable carrier bag that is environmentally-friendly and will save the company money has been launched into stores.

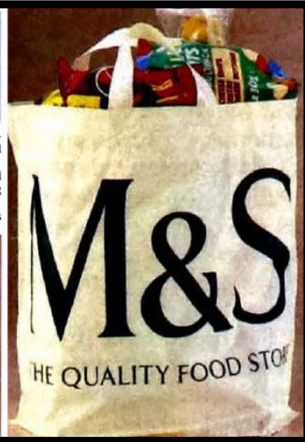
The shopper is cream and green, costs the customer 15p and will withstand weekly use for up to six months. The 'green' bag is due in all stores by the end of March.

Research shows that up to 40 per cent of M&S food customers buy six items or less at a time.

To meet this need, the food wrapping department has also produced a smaller, lighter bag, which is free to customers.

Senior merchandiser David Bloom said: "The combined effect of the two bags reduces the number of large carriers we need to give away."

Members of the environmental committee of the House of Lords have visited Marks & Spencer's pioneering recycling schemes at Hayes DC and Maidenhead



St Michael News, Mar 1991

1992

Percy Pigs were launched. By 2014 over one billion Percy Pigs had been sold.



Percy Pig packaging, c2018

1999

We launched online shopping on our website for the first time.



M&S website, 1999

1999

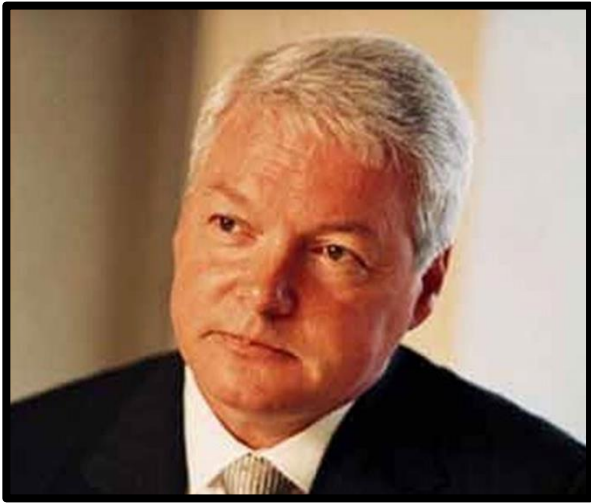
Peter Salsbury became Chief Executive.



Peter Salsbury

2000

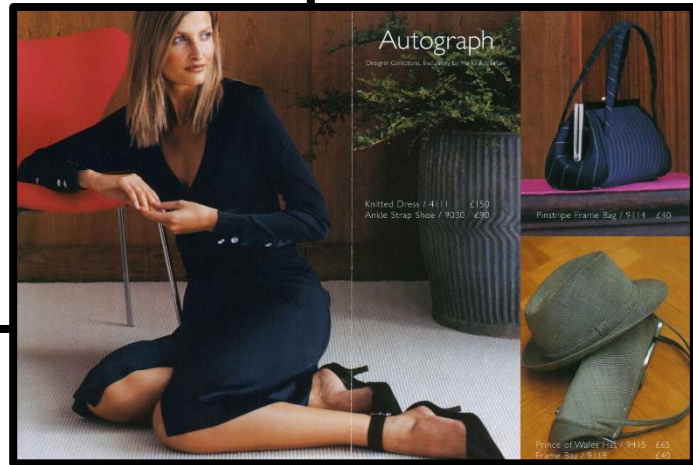
Luc Vandeveld became Chairman.



Luc Vandeveld

2000

The Autograph range of clothing for women was introduced and we began to phase out the St Michael brand.



Autograph marketing, 2001

2001

Per Una range of clothing for women was launched.



Per Una, 2001

2004

Stuart Rose was appointed Chief Executive on 31st May.



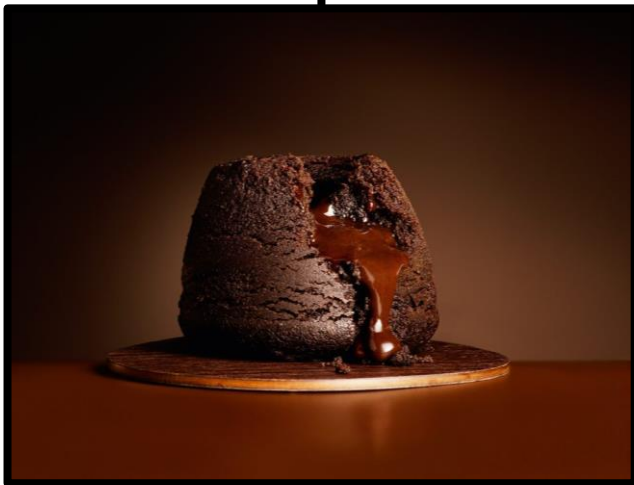
Stuart Rose

2004

The M&S Chocolate Melt in the Middle Pudding is launched.

The idea, from our food developer Elaine Kessler, was based on chocolate fondant, a classic French dessert and took 18 months to create.

It was also part of our iconic This is not just food, this is M&S food advertising campaign. This campaign focused on the products combining slow-motion visuals with a smooth voiceover and cult-classic soundtrack.



M&S Chocolate Melt in the Middle Pudding, 2004

2005

The Eat Well sunflower was introduced to make it easier for customers to choose healthy options.



Eat Well logo

2005

M&S Café Revive became the first UK coffee chain to offer Fairtrade tea and coffee as standard.



Fairtrade coffee, 2006

2007

We launched Plan A - our 100 point eco plan to address challenges in the key areas of climate change, waste, sustainable raw materials, fair partner and health.



Plan A, 2007

2007

We became the first retailer to launch schoolwear made from recycled plastic bottles.



M&S schoolwear, 2007

2008

We were the first retailer to announce a charge of 5p for food carrier bags.

Funds raised from the sale of the bags were donated to charity, the first being Groundwork.



Groundwork marketing, 2008



Shwopped coat, 2012

2008

We launched the M&S and Oxfam Clothes Exchange, which is now known as Shwopping. In 2021/22 401,720 items of clothing were Shwopped with us - generating an estimated £227,000 for Oxfam.



Marc Bolland

2010

Marc Bolland was appointed Chief Executive.



Robert Swannell

2011

Robert Swannell became Chairman.

2012

The M&S Archive opened at the Michael Marks Building in Leeds, bringing together over 72,000 items relating to the history of the business into one place.



M&S Archive, Leeds, 2012



M&S logo, 2015

2015

We're proud of our heritage and acknowledged the rich history of M&S with the addition of 'EST. 1884' to the M&S brand.

2016

Steve Rowe was appointed Chief Executive.



Steve Rowe



Archive by Alexa, 2016

2016

The Archive by Alexa collection was a 31-piece womenswear collection curated by Alexa Chung and the M&S design team, re-imagining archive pieces using Alexa's unique approach to style.

2017

Archie Norman was appointed Chairman.



Archie Norman



Plan A, 2020

2020

Plan A 2020 was launched with 100 new, revised and existing commitments, helping us to achieve our goal of becoming the world's most sustainable retailer.

2020

Our joint venture with Ocado launched. This included a new Food to Order offer, allowing the full availability of our food ranges to be delivered straight to your door.



Ocado delivery vans, 2020

2021

We brought all our digital payment solutions under one brand banner – Scan & Shop with Sparks. This included hand-held scanners and Mobile Pay Go.



2021

We celebrated 95 years of lingerie. Designers visited the archive to look at embroidery in the collection which inspired a new collection of embroidered lingerie.



Rosie for Autograph, 2021



M&S The Originals, 2021

2021

In menswear, designers re-worked archive garments for the Originals range including knitwear, leather jackets and footwear.

2022

Stuart Machin was appointed Chief Executive, alongside Katie Bickerstaffe as Co-Chief Executive.



Stuart Machin and Katie Bickerstaffe, 2022