

Marking Moments

February 2020 - Notes for Carers

Spring is round the corner, but there's still a chill in the air. February sees snowdrops and aconites blooming, as well as the most romantic day of the year!

From the Archive

These notes give more information on the archive images, as well as some example questions to help start conversation and inspire memories. The images could be used as part of a reminiscence session either with a group or one-to-one.

Sheet Music, c1915

The piano was a popular form of entertainment for families in the early 20th century. Sheet music was a best-seller at M&S, some stores even had a pianist to encourage customers to buy the music! As well as romantic songs, customers could buy sheet music for folk songs, music to dance to, hymns and national anthems. 'Annie Laurie' was a poem written around 1700 by the Scottish poet William Douglas. It was set to music in the 1830s by Alicia Scott.

Can you think of any more depictions of love in other songs or books? Can you play the piano, or any other instrument?

Dancing Couple at Mile End Warehouse, 1955

This couple are dancing at a Christmas party held for staff who worked at the M&S warehouse in Mile End. The room is decorated with bunting and streamers. In the 1950s M&S employees could get involved in a wide range of social events, from sports clubs and swimming galas, to trips away and amateur dramatics.

What is your favourite dance to do? What music do you think this couple might be dancing to?

From the Archive - continued

Clothing Advert, 1958

This advert promotes men's and women's clothing at M&S. As well as his Terylene trousers, the man wears a drip-dry shirt - meaning it would dry quickly and wouldn't need ironing. The lady's dress was available in sizes 12-18 and in two lengths. M&S first started selling clothing in 1926 with bestsellers including fleecy knickers and woollen swimsuits. Lots of work was done during the 1950s on synthetic fabrics to produce clothing that was easy to care for, easy to wear and affordable.

Did you ever own Terylene slacks? Or a Bri-Nylon shirt? Do you have a favourite outfit today?

M&S Staff Weddings, 1959 and 1960

These photographs are taken from the staff magazine 'Sparks'. Employees were encouraged to send in photographs and stories to be published in the magazine. It wasn't uncommon for M&S colleagues to marry each other - wedding photographs like these appear quite regularly! The bottom photograph shows Dorothy and Charles who met whilst working at Falmouth store. The top photograph shows Sonia and Joseph who worked at Burnley.

Did you get married? What did you wear? Did you have a honeymoon?

Swapping Gifts, 1961

This couple swap gifts whilst still wearing their pyjamas. The photograph was taken to promote sales of nightwear - Winceyette pyjamas were very popular in the 1960s and 1970s. M&S customers in the 1960s could buy a wide range of gifts for their loved ones including scarves, gloves, handkerchiefs and slippers.

What is the favourite gift you've received? If it was your birthday tomorrow, what would you like to receive?

From the Archive - continued

Roses, 1979

This book gives advice to the reader about how to grow and care for roses. M&S published lots of useful books in the 1970s and 1980s including recipe books, DIY books and books with hair and make-up tips. Roses are often given on Valentine's Day. The tradition of giving Valentine's Day flowers dates back to the late 17th century, giving someone a red rose symbolised true love. The rose took on this meaning because of its affiliation with Aphrodite, the goddess of love.

What is your favourite flower? Do you enjoy gardening? Do you prefer to receive flowers or a pot plant?

Wedding Cakes, 2007

These photographs show wedding cakes sold at M&S in 2007 - the top cake is a traditional tiered fruit cake, the bottom cake is a heart-shaped chocolate and strawberry cake. The tradition of wedding cake dates back to ancient Rome, when the groom would break a loaf of bread over the bride's head, symbolizing fertility. Guests would scramble to pick up the crumbs in order to take home some of that good luck. In the early 19th century sugar became more widely available, so sweet cakes became popular at weddings and other celebrations.

What is your favourite type of cake? Or do you prefer savoury food? If you were throwing a party, what food would you serve your guests?

This Month In...

North Sea Floods, 1953

In 1953 a heavy storm caused widespread flooding across France. Manufacturers of wellington boots including the Dunlop Rubber Company were directed by the government to send supplies of wellies to flood victims in France. This resulted in a shortage of rubber boots in the United Kingdom, which was suffering from the same bad weather. The storm caused a high tide of more than 18.4 feet above sea level, meaning flood defences in the UK, the Netherlands and Belgium were breached. In England and Scotland nearly 1000 miles of coastline were damaged and flooding forced over 30,000 people from their homes, with the East Coast being the worst affected area.

Do you remember the 1953 flood? Have you ever been affected by flooding?

Famous Sportsmen, 1956

This article is taken from St Michael News, a magazine for staff of M&S. The magazine often published articles about famous people shopping at Marks & Spencer - though this article is slightly different! Whilst playing football for England, Tom Finney supplemented his income by working as a plumber, and Preston M&S store was one of his customers. Tom Finney played as an outside left (now known as left-winger) for Preston North End and England in the 1940s and 1950s. For his charitable work he was OBE in 1961, a CBE in 1992 and was knighted in 1998.

Wally Thom was a professional welter/middleweight boxer from Merseyside. This article explains how Wally wore an M&S windcheater when training outdoors.

Do you have a favourite sport? Do you support a football team? Did you enjoy sports at school?

This Month In...

Mary Berry, 1984

Mary Berry worked with M&S in the 1970s and 1980s - she wrote and contributed to recipe books published by M&S including 'Cooking for your Freezer' in 1977. In 1984 Mary demonstrated M&S food at 12 charity cookery shows across the UK. Mary studied catering at college in the 1950s before moving to France to study at the famous Le Cordon Bleu school. Today Mary has published more than 75 cookery books and has hosted several television series.

Do you enjoy cooking? If so, what's your favourite recipe? Did you go to college after school, or did you get a job?

Have a Go...

The two colouring pages could be completed using coloured pencils, pens or paint.

The wordsearch includes romance and Valentine's related words - some words run backwards and some go diagonally.

The quiz could be used individually or with a group. You could plan a small prize for the person who gets the most right answers, or encourage participants to work in groups.