

# Marking Moments

## Notes for Carers

Summer 2023

From power dressing to sportswear,  
in this issue we take a look at the 1980s.

### **From the Archive...**

#### Autumn Style, June 1985

This illustrated article was published in an M&S staff magazine. Sales Assistants reading the magazine would learn about new ranges coming into store, and how to create outfits on mannequins and in window displays. The article also contains useful information that Sales Assistants could pass on to customers to help them shop.

Did you ever wear shoulder pads?

Where did you buy your clothes in the 1980s?

#### Autumn Leaves, 1985

M&S first started selling homeware at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Our market stalls sold household essentials like kitchen utensils, baking moulds, candles and tacks. By the 1980s, customers shopping at M&S could choose from a wide range of homeware. Not only crockery and cookware, but furniture and curtains too. The Autumn Leaves and Harvest range were very popular, many customers decorated their whole kitchens with the print.

Many people received M&S crockery as wedding presents, what would you give to someone getting married today?

Do you have a favourite tea set or dinner service?

## Staff Uniforms, c1982

When M&S first started life on market stalls in the north of England, there was no set uniform for Sales Assistants across the business. In the 1940s, Sales Assistants wore a dark green dress and in the 1960s they wore a blue gingham dress. The uniform shown in the picture was introduced in the late 1970s. As well as the staff canteen, colleagues working at M&S in the 1980s could visit the store hairdresser and benefited from regular check-ups by a store chiropodist.

Have you ever worn a uniform for work?

## Ready Meals, 1985

Food has been sold at M&S since the very early days of the business, but the ranges expanded rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s. Customer taste was broadening, and people wanted to try new foods. At the same time, household microwaves and freezers were becoming more common, and so ready meals and freezer food grew in popularity. At M&S, Chinese and Indian food was introduced, as well as a range of Italian ready meals and prepared vegetables including cauliflower cheese and potato bake.

What is your favourite food?

Do you like to cook?

## Sandwiches, 1982

M&S started selling pre-packed sandwiches in 1980. They were initially trialled in four stores and proved so popular that by 1982 the range had expanded to 140 stores. The first flavour to be sold was salmon and tomato. The most popular flavour, prawn & mayonnaise, was introduced in 1981 and is still our best-selling sandwich.

What is your favourite sandwich?

What would you pack for a picnic?

## Sportswear, 1984

Customers shopping at M&S in the 1930s could buy tennis pullovers, and in the 1960s our men's jumpers and slacks were advertised as being suitable for golf, but it wasn't until the 1980s that sportswear became a department in its own right. There was an increase in sport participation generally in the 1980s and 1990s, and so our sportswear ranges for men and women grew to meet demand.

Do you play any sports?

What's your favourite sport to watch on television?

## Suits, 1989

The 1980s saw one of our biggest fashion innovations – colour match technology. Previously, suit jackets and trousers had to be cut from the same piece of cloth to ensure they matched, then sold as a set meaning the customer might have to get either garment altered to fit. Colour match technology let the customer buy his jacket and trousers separately, ensuring both fit perfectly, yet still be guaranteed matching colour fabric.

When do you wear a suit?

What type of car do you think is shown in the photograph?

## Menswear, 1983

Customers shopping for suits in the 1980s could choose from a huge range of styles including dinner suits, office suits and suits in more casual tweed-type fabric shown in the photograph. Men's matching jackets and trousers were available in a combination of 200 sizes, including 3 different jacket lengths.

Have you ever been measured for a suit?

Do you enjoy wearing a suit, or do you prefer to dress more casually?

## Womenswear, 1986 and 1983

In the 1980s millions of people around the world watched programmes Dallas and Dynasty. They had a huge influence on fashion, and many of the styles were adapted for the high street – padded shoulders, stiletto heels, boxy jackets, slim-fit skirts and shiny fabrics. In this image, the purple leopard print jumper is covered in sequins, while the black jacket is finished with diamante-covered buttons.

What would you wear for a party?

## Frilled Collars, 1982

Frills and ruffles on dresses and shirts were very popular with M&S customers in the early 1980s, a look influenced by outfits worn by Princess Diana. In 1981 we said 'Romance is in the air for St Michael ladies' spring fashions. Blouses will continue to follow the romantic theme with frills and ruffles both at the neck and cuffs'.

Which celebrity do you think dresses well?

## Cosmetics, 1982

These small tins contain varied colours of eyeshadow and blusher. Cosmetics had been available at M&S as early as the 1920s, and in the 1940s customers could buy brands like Coty, Max Factor and Gala. In 1975 we launched our own range of in-house cosmetics. The Face by Michele was 'a whole range of exciting St Michael cosmetics'. It included cream blush, cream eyeshadow, mascara, cream and pearl lipstick and coordinating nail polish.

Do you have a favourite brand of make-up?

## Toiletries, 1985

Although we sold talc and soap in the 1920s, our first complete first range of M&S toiletries was introduced in the 1970s and included shampoos for different hair types, toothpaste, spray anti-perspirant and roll-on deodorant. In the 1980s products like Peach or Forest Fern bubble bath were popular gifts at Christmas and birthdays, and the Burgundy range for men was launched.

What is your favourite fragrance?

## **Have a Go...**

### 1980s Quiz

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

### Wordsearch

You'll need: pens or pencils

Print out a copy for each of your participants. Ask them to find the 1980s-related words in the list. Some words go diagonally, and some might go backwards!