

Marking Moments

Your newsletter from the
M&S Archive – Summer 2025

From Saturday jobs to being self-employed, in this issue we take a look at jobs and occupations.

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Sales assistants, c1900



M&S Post Room, 1940s

The women in this photograph worked at M&S Head Office on Baker Street in London. Their job was to sort the incoming mail, using the pigeonholes on the right to ensure the letters reached the right people. Many of the women in the photo would have joined M&S straight from school.

- What do you think the lady on the left is doing?
- Did you have a job straight from school?



Womenswear Designers, 1963

Rosemary and Maureen worked in the Design Department at M&S. Both women had studied fashion at the Royal College of Art in London. Designers at M&S received lots of training, including in pattern cutting and textile technology. They often visited fashion shows around the world looking for design inspiration.

- Did you go to college?
- What do you notice about the design studio? Lots of lighting, large tables for drawing and cutting, and mannequins for fitting garments?



Truck drivers, 1980s

The top photo shows a refrigerated lorry parked up at an M&S loading bay. Below it is a lorry with a tail lift – the driver stacks boxes of merchandise ready for unloading, whilst a car squeezes past!

- What vehicles have you driven?
- What make do you think the cars in the photographs are?



Machinists in a shirt factory, 1980s

Dewhirst have been a supplier of M&S since the very early days of the business. In the 1980s many of the shirts and suits sold at M&S were made by Dewhirst. This photo shows rows of people sat at sewing machines, surrounded by piles of pattern pieces and shirts.

- Have you ever made clothing, either at work or for yourself?



Comptometer operators, 1960s

Comptometers were mechanical calculators, invented in the 1880s and in use until the 1970s. Comptometrists, or 'comps' as they were called at M&S were responsible for recording and checking the accuracy of store takings and stock figures, as well as converting them into dozens or pounds, shillings and pence.

- Did you enjoy maths at school?
- Have you ever worked in an office? What role did you have?



M&S canteen, 1980s

Colleagues in M&S stores and offices were able to use the staff canteen. No cash was used in the canteen – booklets of meal vouchers could be purchased in advance from the store office. In 1983 the Marble Arch store served 600 lunches every day, which only cost staff 10p!

- What is your favourite lunch?
- Did you have a canteen at work? Or did you take a packed lunch?



Typists, 1960s

These women worked in the typing room at M&S Head Office. Directors and other colleagues would either hand-write or dictate correspondence that would be sent to the typing pool to be typed up. Like working in the post room, this was an entry level job from where many women would work their way up to jobs across Head Office.

- Did you ever learn to type?
- Can you write in shorthand?



Artists and designers, 1950s

This photograph shows Elisabeth Tomalin, who looked after the Print Design Department. Elisabeth was an artist in her own right; she used her artistic skills to design printed fabrics for dresses. She looked after a team of designers at M&S Head Office in Baker Street, London.

- Do you enjoy painting or drawing?
- Have a look around the room you're in to see what prints and patterns you can see. Who do you think designed them?



Uniform – through the years.

Top, 1890s. Bottom, 1950s.

In the early days of M&S there was no set uniform for store colleagues. Assistants wore dark dresses, often with a contrasting collar.

In the 1950s, the customer assistant uniform was pale blue nylon, some staff wore a gold brooch at neck. These nylon dresses were quite stiff, and not very breathable!



Uniform – through the years.

Top, early 1980s. Bottom, 1994.

The top photograph shows the different uniforms for sales assistants, supervisors and warehouse staff, introduced in 1979 after two and a half years of wearer trials!

In the 1990s sales assistants wore a printed dress with a navy blazer. Male supervisors wore a v-neck jumper with shirt and tie. Uniform designers spent lots of time chatting to staff about what they wanted from a new uniform.

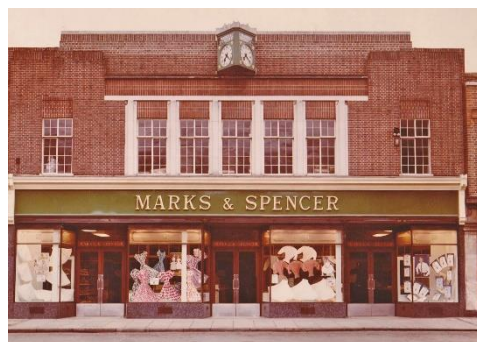
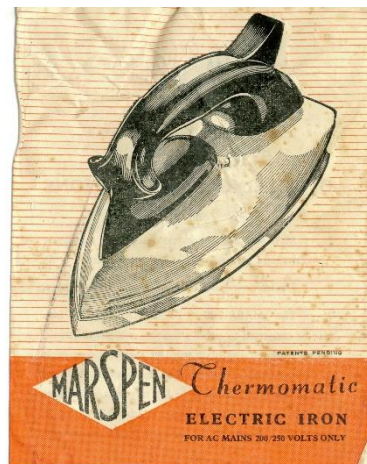
Have a Go... Archivist for a day

The collection at the M&S Archive contains objects and records that tell the story of Marks & Spencer. A small team of Archivists care for, organise and provide access to the collection.

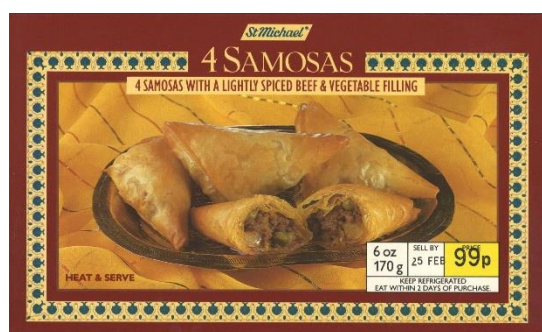
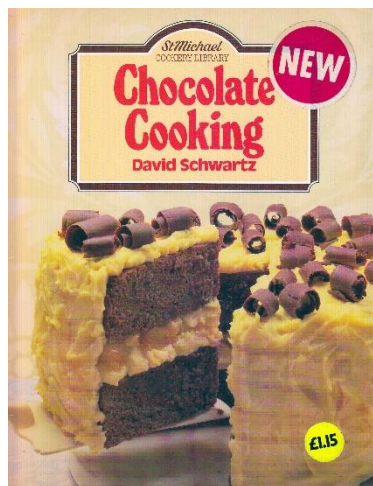
Imagine you're an Archivist for the day, and create your own collection. Collect objects for your collection, take photos, make drawings or write a list of the things you think should be in your archive.

- Think of a name for your archive. Will you create 'The Archive of Me', or an archive of your home? Perhaps an archive of your favourite football team, or a collection dedicated to cats!
- To get you started, the next two pages contain objects, documents and photographs that you can cut out and add to your archive.
- Once you have some objects in your archive, imagine you're open to visitors, what would you tell them about your collection? Which items would you put on display? Try writing a caption for your favourite item.

Have a Go... Archivist for a day



Have a Go... Archivist for a day



Have a Go... Wordsearch

Find as many of the work-related words below as you can.

Don't forget, the words might go diagonally, or even backwards!

C	N	V	B	U	I	L	D	E	R	D	A	B	T	W
L	I	H	L	B	P	H	V	M	D	L	Q	N	T	W
U	Y	F	A	C	T	O	R	Y	A	I	A	E	J	E
O	K	R	E	V	I	R	D	U	U	T	S	C	H	E
E	J	C	K	M	Q	T	S	M	S	L	S	I	T	K
N	T	Z	J	I	P	S	I	I	O	D	E	F	A	E
G	E	N	T	I	E	L	S	P	A	X	R	F	X	N
I	B	L	A	N	X	S	O	Z	S	V	T	O	H	D
N	X	R	F	T	A	U	R	Y	O	I	I	G	N	X
E	Q	D	F	E	N	U	Y	Q	M	I	A	A	O	I
E	Z	R	I	R	C	U	F	R	C	E	W	J	I	J
R	W	Y	Q	V	R	O	O	Q	A	L	N	N	S	E
G	D	L	N	I	X	J	Z	C	B	L	B	T	N	M
X	X	H	P	E	E	B	F	P	C	Z	A	W	E	H
F	G	X	N	W	G	R	Q	C	U	A	Q	S	P	Y

ACCOUNTANT
ASSISTANT
BUILDER
DRIVER
EMPLOYMENT

ENGINEER
FACTORY
INTERVIEW
OFFICE
PENSION

SALARY
TIPS
WAITRESS
WEEKEND

Have a Go... Quiz



Find the answers to these work-themed questions on the next page

1. What does the acronym CV stand for?
2. Which 80s TV character had the catchphrase 'gizza job'?
3. What newspaper did Superman work for?
4. What was the former occupation of shot-putter and strongman Geoff Capes?
5. What do you call a person who climbs tall structures such as chimneys in order to carry out repairs?
6. An apiarist is another word for what sort of job or hobby?
7. What did a cordwainer make?
8. According to his business card what did gangster Al Capone sell?
9. What job did Ernest Hemingway do in the First World War?
10. What is the name for someone who makes or sells candles and/or soap?

A black and white photograph of a library or study hall. Numerous people are seated at long wooden desks, working on papers or books. The room is filled with books and papers, creating a studious atmosphere. The lighting is soft, and the overall scene depicts a quiet place of learning.

Have a Go... Quiz

M&S

Answers

1. Curriculum Vitae
2. Yosser Hughes from 'Boys from the Black Stuff'
3. Daily Planet
4. Police Officer
5. Steeplejack
6. Beekeeper
7. Shoes
8. Secondhand furniture
9. Ambulance driver
10. A chandler

Have a Go... Spot the difference

Print out this page and the next. Can you find six differences between the pictures?

The answers are on page 20 – no peeking!



Have a Co... Spot the difference

M&S



Have a Go... Spot the difference

Answers



Your Marking Moments

We'd love to see what you've been up to!

To appear in the next issue of Marking Moments, send your photographs to archive@marksandspencer.com, ensuring you've completed the form below for each person in the photographs

PHOTOGRAPHIC CONSENT FORM

Background

From time to time the M&S Archive (the "Archive") takes photographs and film to promote its collections for commercial or non-commercial purposes (the "Images").

In order for the Archive to use the Images as required, all persons over 18 can give their consent by signing this Photographic Consent Form (the "Agreement") for themselves.

Consent

This Agreement covers Marks & Spencer's use of the Images by the Archive. By signing this Agreement to be photographed for the Archive, I give consent to the full use of the Images by the Archive. I do not object to the Archive storing my details on its database.

I agree the Images may be combined with other images, text and graphics, and cropped, altered or edited and that the copyright and/or any other intellectual property rights in the Images shall be owned by the Archive and where necessary, I hereby assign any such rights to the Archive.

Date images taken:

Images taken by (print name):

Subject of image (print name):

Subject's signature: