

M&S: Lingerie

Providing secret support since 1926



White cotton and rayon bra, 1920s
Ref: T81/18

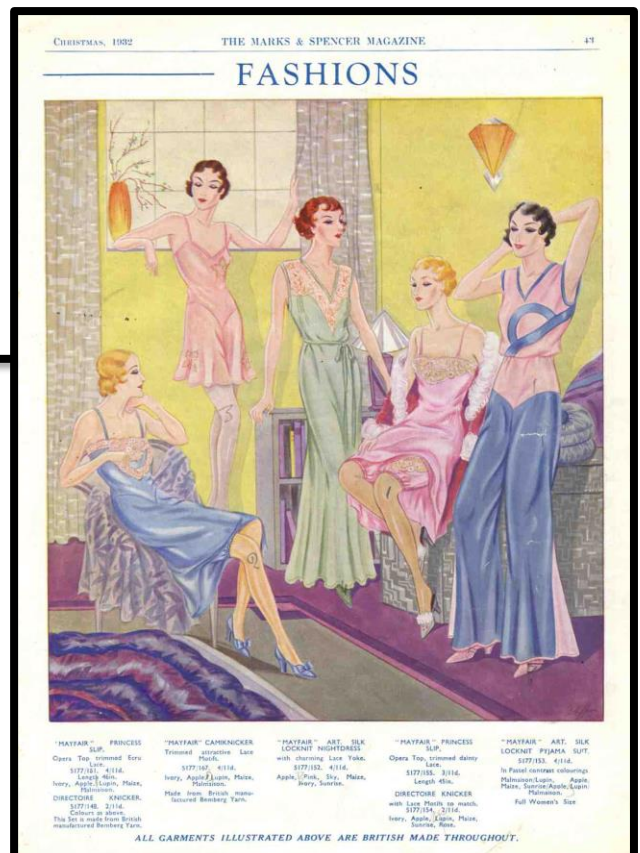
1926

We introduced our first bras, designed to suit the ideal of a flatter chest and boyish figure, fashions that were all the rage in the 1920s.

As well as bras we sold garters, directoire knickers, sanitary belts and free-run bodices.

1932

We sold corsetry and uplifting brassieres advertised with the slogan 'A perfect figure guaranteed'. These new styles suited the changing trend for 'lift and separation'.



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



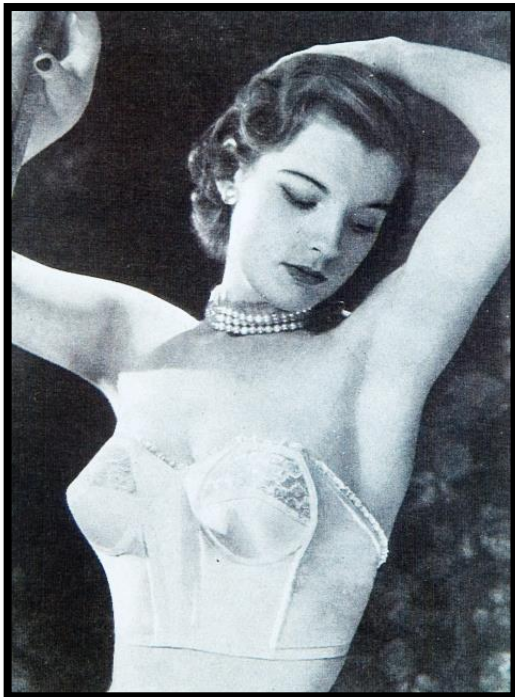
Satin bra with Utility label,
c1943 Ref: T1941/5

1941-1945

All clothing during the war had to adhere to Utility standards, due to the shortages posed by wartime conditions. Clothing had to meet the Government's regulations, and we developed a Utility lingerie range that was not only functional but attractive.

1951-1953

We developed our bra sizes to include three cup sizes; small, medium and large. This was inspired by American lingerie and allowed the bras to fit a greater proportion of women. In 1953 we sold 125,000 brassieres per week.



St Michael News, 1953

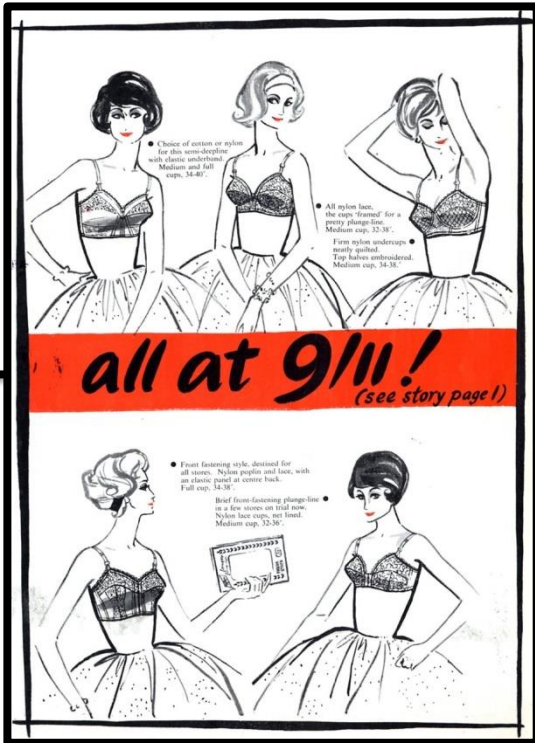


Advert showing range of bra sizes,
St Michael News, Jan 1958

1953

We started selling bras aimed at teenagers and younger women. Light, simple styles such as the brief brassiere were designed for the more 'youthful figure'.

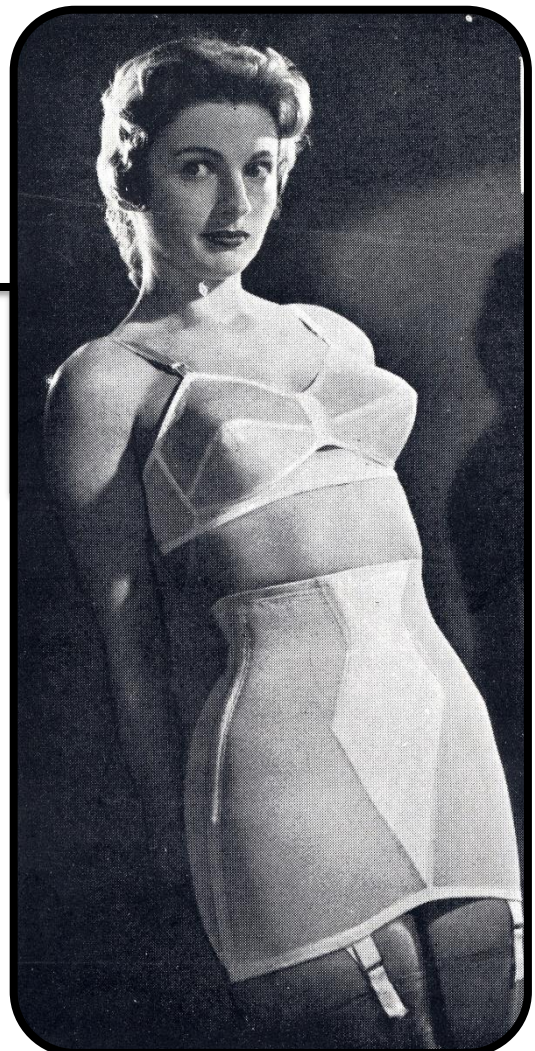
In 1953 we sold 25% of the nation's total sales in knitted vests. Women's knitted vests were only available in two sizes; medium and large.



St Michael News, Sep 1958

1955

We sold elastic high line girdles, which provided more support, and ensured 'spare tyres, [and] ungainly bulges are eliminated'. The girdles had very little boning, so were much more comfortable than earlier designs.



St Michael News, Jul 1955

1957

Full-body, shaping lingerie was available. This all-nylon corselette which combined a bra and girdle was trialled in October 1957.

1958

Following successful trials we started selling an American-inspired bra with moulded foam cups.



St Michael News, Oct 1957



St Michael News, Sep 1960

1960

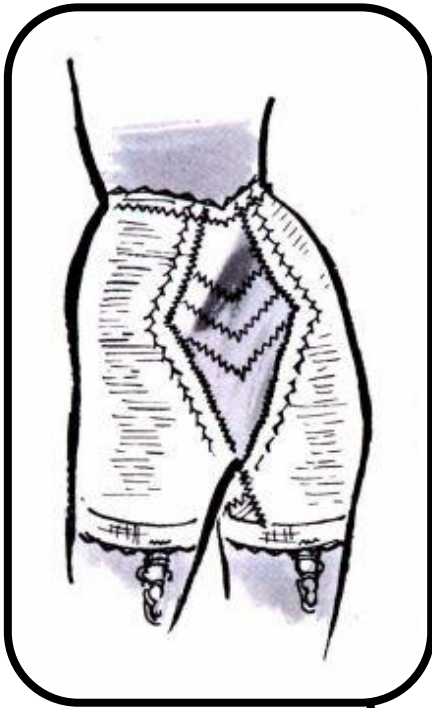
Two-way stretch net was developed by firms such as John Heathcoat & Co, an M&S supplier. The this new fabric allowed for comfort and ease of movement.

1960

We introduced new underwear styles for **girls**. And **nylon slips** with stiff paper taffeta frills to achieve a full skirt, were available for ages **5-16**.



St Michael News,
May 1960

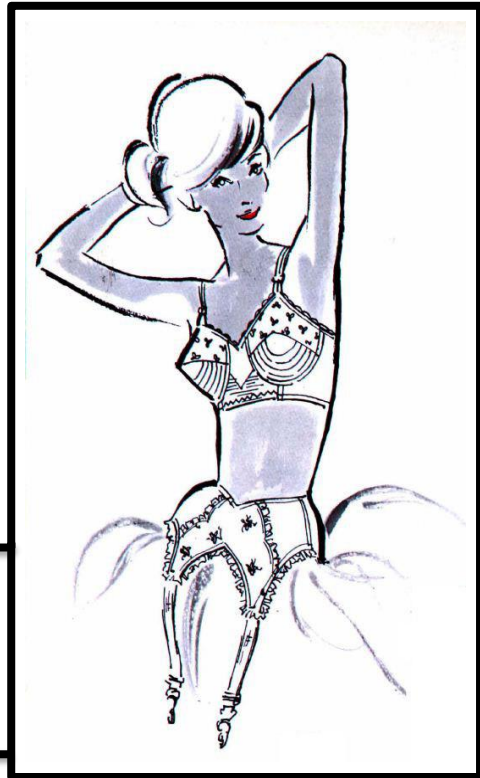


St Michael News, Oct 1961

1961

Panty girdles were available in three leg lengths. They offered support and a smooth silhouette under trousers.

The same year, bra and suspender belt sets offering lighter support were promoted to teenagers.



St Michael News, Oct 1961

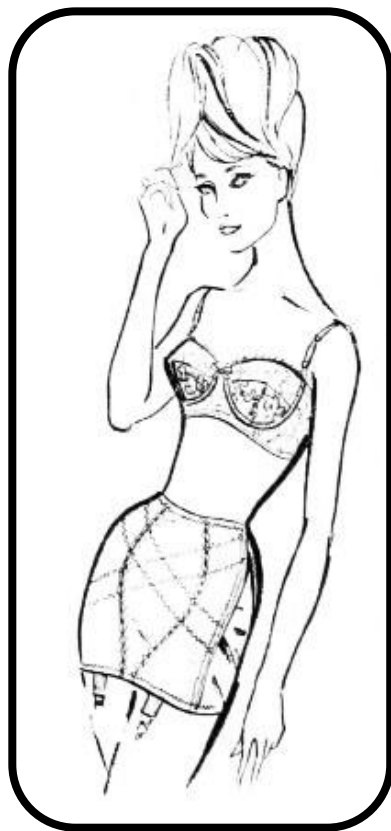


St Michael News, Spring 1961

1961

In Spring 1961 we launched our first tailored slip. Special techniques were developed to ensure the slip took the strain, rather than the skirt.

We first began using Lycra in 1961 when it was introduced into our girdles. It was promoted as soft to touch, easy to wash and light to wear whilst still offering firm control.



St Michael News, Nov 1962

1962

We began selling bras with a cushioned undercup, particularly suitable for women with a smaller figure. The same year, Lycra began to be used in our girdles.

1963

We used specially commissioned nylon lace designs from Nottingham manufacturers to trim our lingerie.



Leavers lace made in Nottingham, St Michael News, Feb 1963



★Above : The Bra section in fine Leaver's lace, the back and side panels are all elastic and the stretch shoulder straps are adjustable.

★Below : St. Michael fine cotton Broadcloth lined bra has stitched undercup and closed end shoulder straps.



1964

Our lingerie designers were constantly working to improve comfort and support. In 1964 we promoted bras with elastic adjustable straps, and elastic back and side panels.

1965

We were the first retailer in the UK to sell pre-shrunk cotton underwear.

In 1965 we became the first major retailer to introduce a range of coordinating bras and girdles. From light to firm control, the girdles came in lace and fabric to match the bras.

The same year, stretch lace was introduced to girdles and panty girdles.



St Michael News, 1966



St Michael News, 1966

1965

The girdle range of 1965 focused on the 'rounded rear.' The American-inspired range gave a gentle uplift and was recommended for wearing beneath trousers.

An all-in-one bra slip was on a trial run, using a moulded bra with a firm elastic back and a nylon skirt.

1966

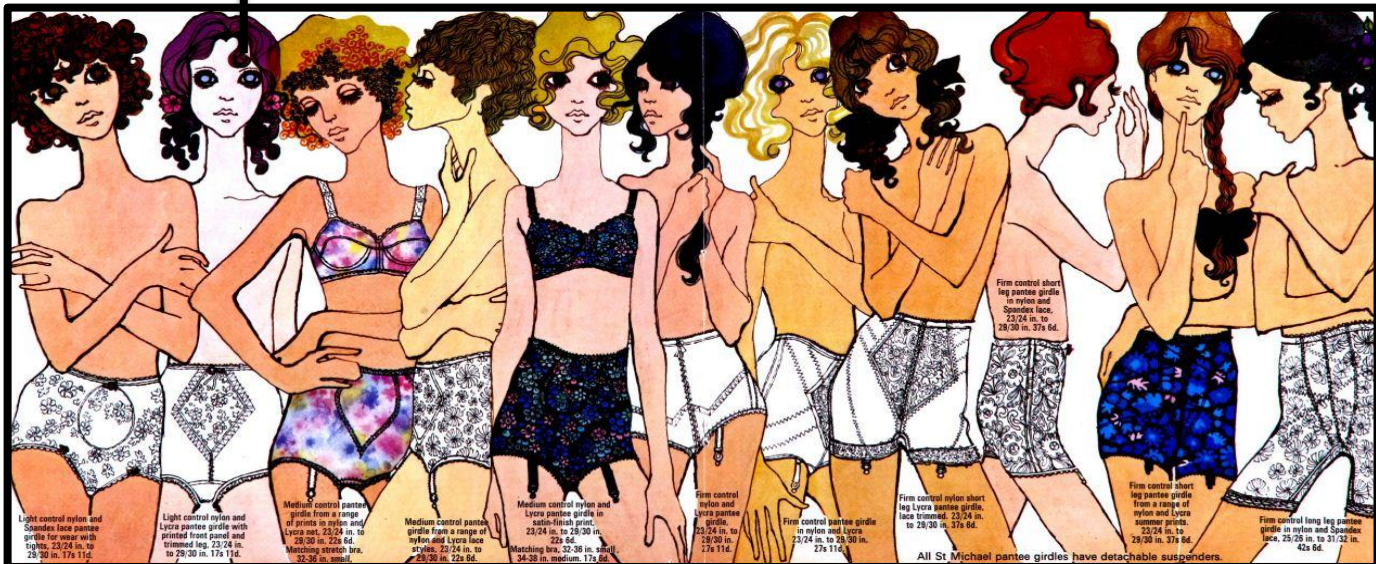
We introduced mix and match all-over lace bras, briefs, slips and girdles, made with Nottingham lace.



St Michael News, Spring 1967

1967

Stretch nylon straight leg panty
briefs were recommended for
wearing under trousers.



St Michael News, Sfeb/Mar 1968



St Michael News, Aug 1966

1968

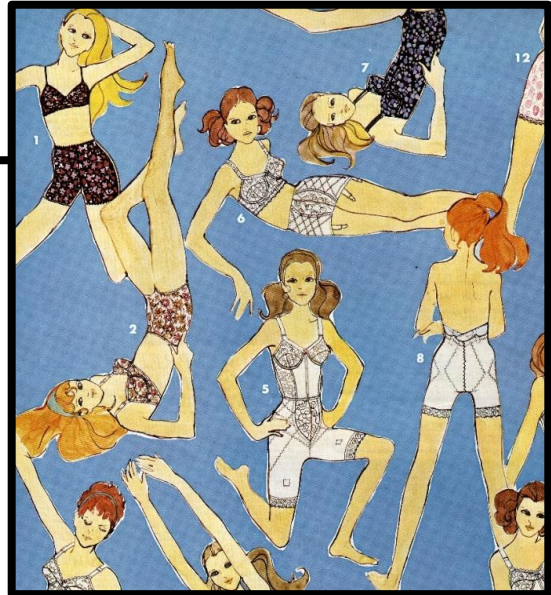
We launched a new range of panty girdles which included high cut models that bolstered the rear. The girdles were available in light, medium and firm control and came in a variety of fabrics, in plain or printed designs.



All-in-one pantie girdle and slip, St Michael News, Mar 1969

1969

The all-in-one pantie girdle and slip was introduced. The new shorter length slip was designed so it could be worn with a mini skirt and by women under 5ft2".



St Michael News, Feb 1969

1969

We introduced cup sizes to our bras (A-D) which replaced the small/medium/large sizes.



Hosiery advert, 1967

1971

New hosiery lines were introduced which included larger tights for fuller figures and pregnant women



St Michael News, 1973

1972

The Scanlace Bra became a classic in 1972, after selling over a million in just 18 months. It was our first unlined bra, described as 'less bra doing the same job as before'.



St Michael 'Shape Up; illustration, 1970s

1973

Hosiery department developed extra sheer tights which had patterned pants and a built in cotton gusset (panty hose). This meant that knickers were not required and thus avoided the visible panty line.

1974

We began selling a halter neck style bra – it cost 99p!



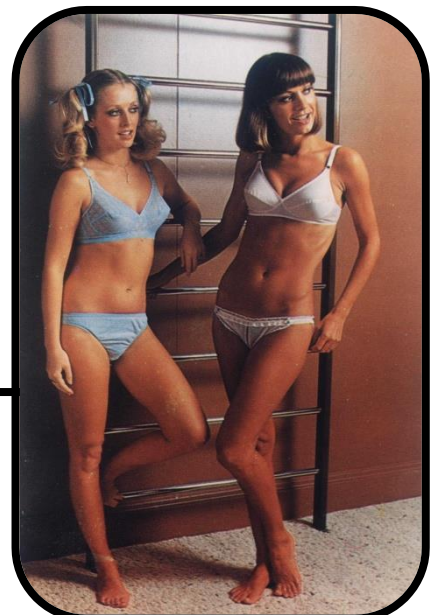
Halter neck style bra, St. Michael News, Apr 1974



Bra and bikini brief sets, St Michael News, Jan 1976

1976

New matching bra and bikini brief sets were sold in knitted nylon or fine knitted cotton were launched.



Bra and kickers, St Michael News, Feb 1977

1977

Over a two week period our knickers exports doubled to an all time high of nearly 500,000 pairs.



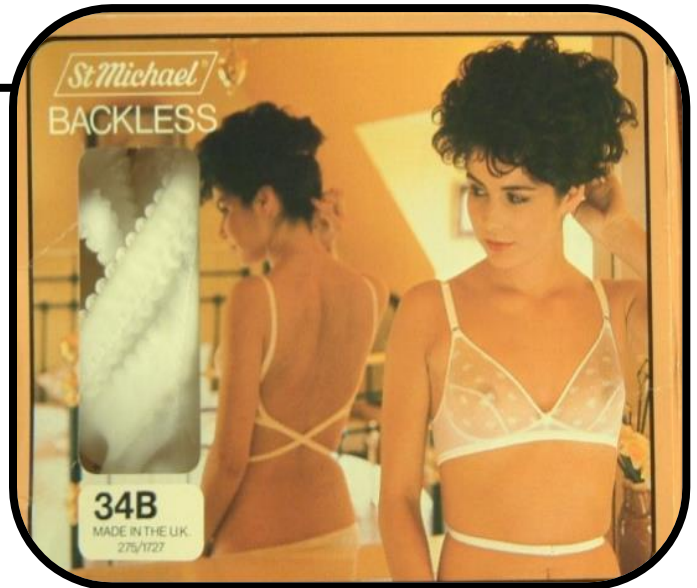
Lingerie advert, St Michael News, Feb 1978

1978

We created a Nylon front fastening plunge bra which was available for 99p.

1983

Our Lingerie department kept apace of the latest fashion trends in the 1980s, as demonstrated by this Backless Bra.



St Michael Backless Bra, 1983



Bras for today's woman advert, St Michael News, Feb 1983

1983

An in-store campaign, 'Bras for Today's Woman' encouraged women to buy into a wardrobe of different bras. 'Ladies need at least three styles: a good softly shaped day bra, a seamless bra for the 'natural' look to wear under t-shirts and a deeply plunging glamour bra for evenings.'

Alongside this we developed a luxurious lingerie range which featured satin camisoles, bras, French knickers and slips.



Advert in St Michael News for sporty style underwear, May 1984

1984

We launched a new sporty style underwear in ten stores. The range comprised either plain or striped cotton. Also during this year, we began to display and sell lingerie on hangers rather than packaged boxes. By doing this we were able to display items from the same range together.

1992

Triumph International was named as the maker of M&S's new balcony bra.



The making of a Triumph bra. St Michael News, Mar 1992

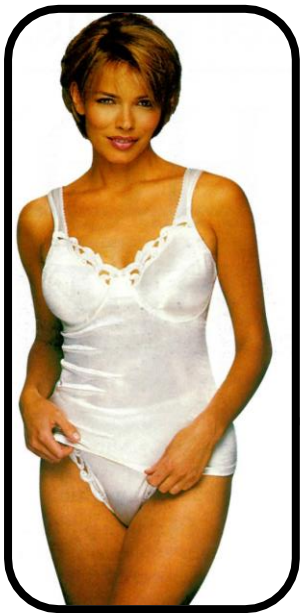
1994

In 1994 M&S developed a new bra fitting service involving more thorough measurements. Staff underwent two days of rigorous training and assessment to ensure they were giving customers the best service.



Training for the bra fitting service, St Michael News, Nov/Dec 1994

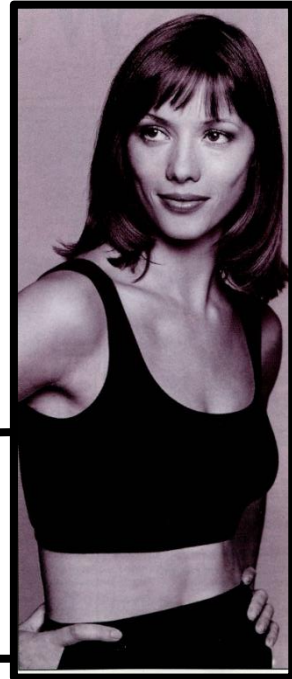
We also introduced 'Mum to be' and bridal underwear collections.



Under-wired camisole, St Michael News , Aug 1995

1995

We launched machine washable under-wired bras and also introduced under-wired camisoles - these had adjustable back fasteners for ease of comfort and fit.



Seam-free underwear, St Michael News, Mar 1999

1999

Seam free hosiery was introduced to give a smooth appearance.



Wild Hearts and Salon Rose launch event, On Your Marks Aug/Sep 2002

2002

Designer collections Salon Rose (designed by Agent Provocateur) and Wild Heart (by Collette Dinnigan) were launched. 2002 also saw the introduction of Mix and Match straps, which were available for sheer strap and multi-way bras.

2005

Two collections of per una lingerie launched in 48 stores across the country.



Per Una Lingerie logo, Your M&S, Dec 2005



Breast Cancer Awareness campaign, Your M&S, Sep/Oct 2006

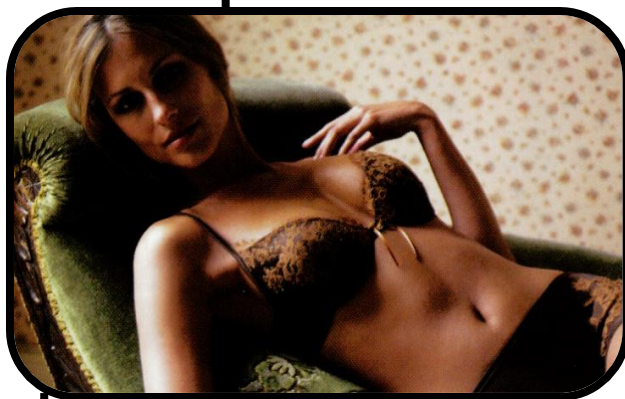
2006

Launch of post surgery bras for Breast Cancer. The Lingerie team were challenged to produce a range of attractive post surgery bras with internal pockets to hold prosthesis.

A 10% donation from the sale of each post surgery bra went to the charity Breakthrough Breast Cancer.

2006

The Autograph lingerie range was launched. The first colour palette was rich chocolate and ivory.



Autograph Lingerie, Your M&S, Sep/Oct 2006



Moisturising tights, The M&S Difference

2007

Bare cooling hosiery range launched. Tights and hold-ups were made from light material and released a cooling sensation while providing a bare, natural tanned leg look. There were 3 types to choose from, slimming, energising and moisturising.



Anti-cellulite waist and thigh slimmer, The M&S Difference

2009

We introduced a waist and thigh slimmer, which with vitamin E, aloe-vera and caffeine, visibly reduced signs of cellulite.

2011

Launch of our Plan A product – a carbon neutral bra.
We also developed Heatgen™ - a ladies thermal underwear range.

The same year we presented our new bridal lingerie range at The Goring Hotel, London. The range was inspired by prints and techniques from the M&S Company Archive.



All-in-one posture improver from Posture Poise range, The M&S Difference

2012

Perfect Poise range was designed to increase awareness of correct posture by providing support to the shoulders, back and bust.



2012

Rosie Huntington-Whiteley launched her first range of lingerie, showcasing French-designed lace, luxurious silks and soft feminine prints



2016

We celebrated 90 years of lingerie at M&S by redesigning the 1970s scanlace bra for today's customer. The bra was available in three colours, underwired and non-wired, and with matching knickers.

2017

Today, one in three British women buys their bras from M&S. Forty-five bras are sold every minute in store, while two pairs of knickers fly through the tills each second.