

# M&S History



## M&S During World War Two Timeline

- 1933 Hitler comes to power in Germany. M&S objects to his anti-Jewish policies so they stop selling German products.
- 1938 The Kindertransport rescue operation helps over 10,000 children (many of them Jewish) to escape Nazi Europe and come to Britain. M&S sponsors some evacuated children.
- 1939 The Second World War starts in September. The shop windows in M&S stores are covered for 'black out' and staff are given air raid precaution and first aid training.
- 1940 Food rationing starts in January. Shoppers have to 'register' at their local food shops, including their M&S store, to be able to buy their rationed items. In May, a special team of M&S staff from stores along the Kent coast help to care for injured troops returning from the Dunkirk evacuation. In September, the M&S store in Harlesden, North London is the first to be destroyed by enemy bombing. Over the course of the war, 16 M&S stores are destroyed and another 100 badly damaged.
- 1941 M&S employees collect £5,000 (over quarter of a million pounds today) to pay for a Spitfire Fighter Aircraft named 'The Marksman'. In April, the M&S store in Plymouth, a key naval target, is destroyed during five nights of heavy bombing. M&S employees help with the clear up. A temporary store opens two weeks later, including a soup kitchen to help the thousands of people made homeless by the bombing. Clothes rationing is introduced in June, along with strict rules to avoid wasting fabric. M&S experts help design the 'Civilian Clothing 1941', or 'utility' scheme.
- 1942 Cafe Bars serving hot, healthy lunches without using people's ration allocation are now operating in 80 M&S stores across the country.
- 1944 M&S starts producing a special staff newsletter, 'The Forces Bulletin', which is sent to M&S staff serving in the armed forces. It gives information on servicemen who've been injured, killed or captured, as well as news from the stores at home. In July, the M&S store in Lewisham is destroyed by bombing, killing 5 members of staff including 15 year old sales assistant Alice May Thompson, the youngest M&S employee killed during the war.
- 1945 The war ends, with 'Victory in Europe' or VE day in May, then 'Victory in Japan' or VJ day in September. M&S starts to run special courses to retrain men and women returning from the war to their M&S jobs.
- 1946 The last edition of 'The Forces Bulletin' is produced, as most M&S staff who served in the war are already home or will soon be back from Prisoner of War camps. In total, 104 M&S staff died while serving in the Armed Forces or on duty in our stores during the war.
- 1949 Clothing rationing finally ends.
- 1954 Meat is the last type of food to be made freely available, ending all food rationing.