

Hosiery

Today hosiery is used to refer to tights and stockings, but the term once referred to machine-knitted hose and underwear which might be made from cotton or silk. It was produced on the stocking frame until the 19th century when power-driven full-fashioned knitting machines were invented, which would go on to produce a wider range of knitwear clothing including nylon tights.

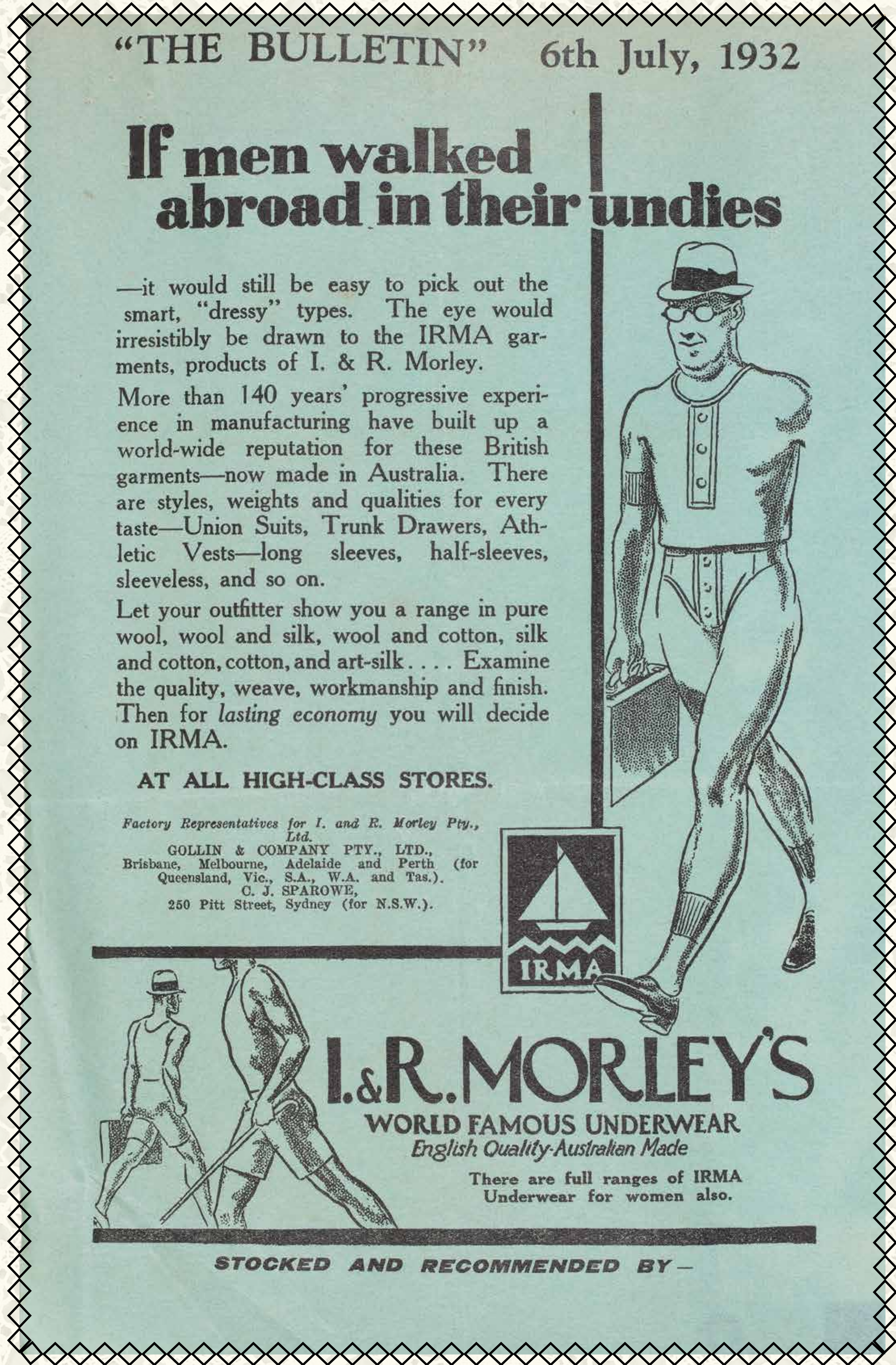
Fully-fashioned refers to the knitting of a shaped component such as a sleeve (achieved by increasing or decreasing the number of loops to produce the shape). In the East Midlands firms invested heavily in full-fashioned knitting machines which they considered to be superior. Imports and globalisation eventually forced most companies to adopt the cheaper cut and sew method using circular machines to produce fabric knitted in large tubes, which is how most of the clothes we wear today are made.

William Cotton (born in Leicestershire in 1819) invented a full-fashioned machine in 1860 capable of producing four items at once. When his patent ran out in 1879 other firms began developing their own machines. In 1929 Brettles developed their first full fashioned silk hose machine, built at their works at Belper, Derbyshire. Previously they would have to wait over a year for a British firm to build them a new machine, or even go to Germany for their requirements. In 1932 tariffs were introduced on imported machinery to encourage the British machine building sector. But the larger firms such as I&R Morley were keen to exploit overseas markets and in 1928, they opened a new factory in Ballarat, Australia.

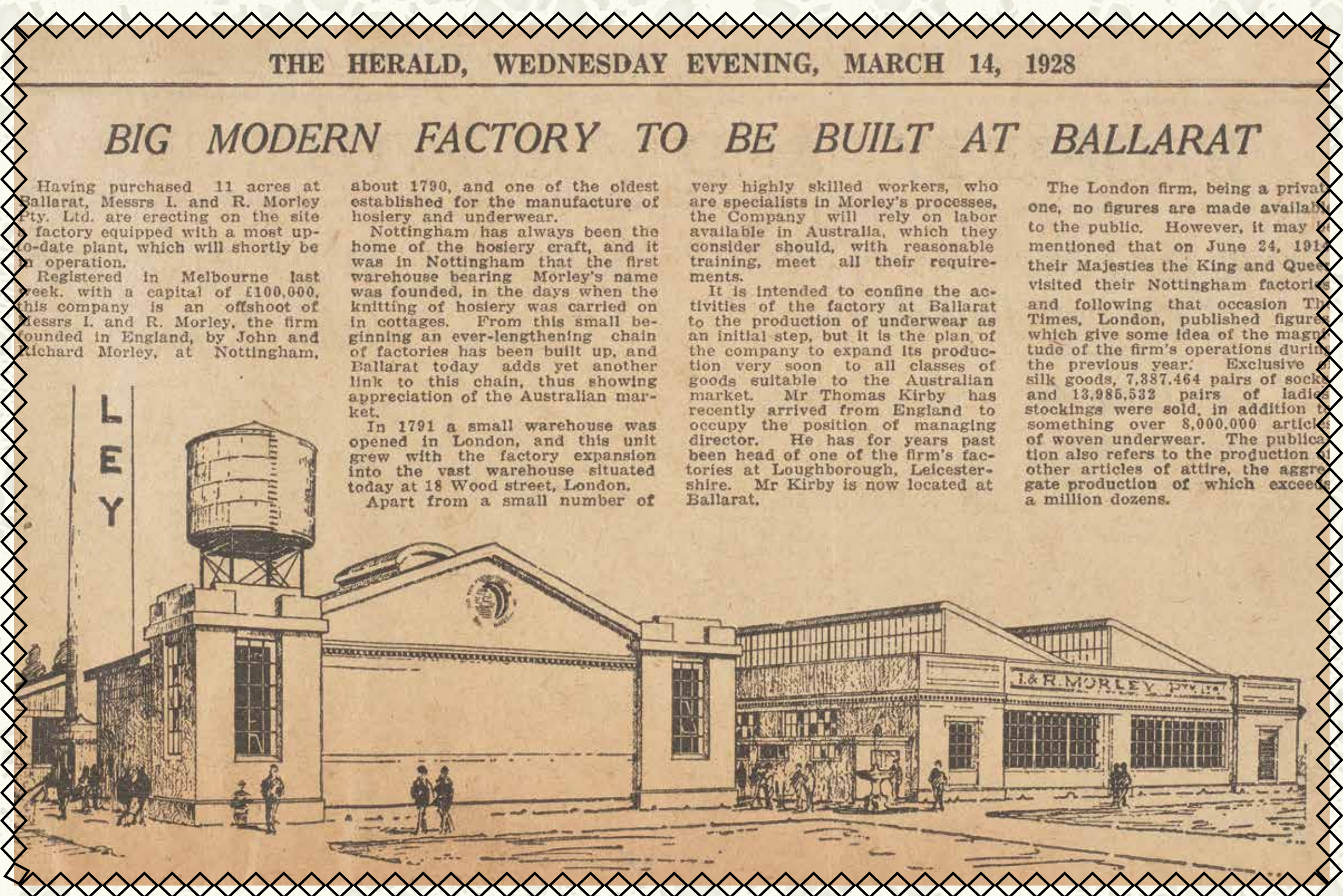
Dalkeith Knitwear expanded its premises in Alfreton, Derbyshire in 1965 in order to increase its export market, calling for better export incentives such as tax rebates.



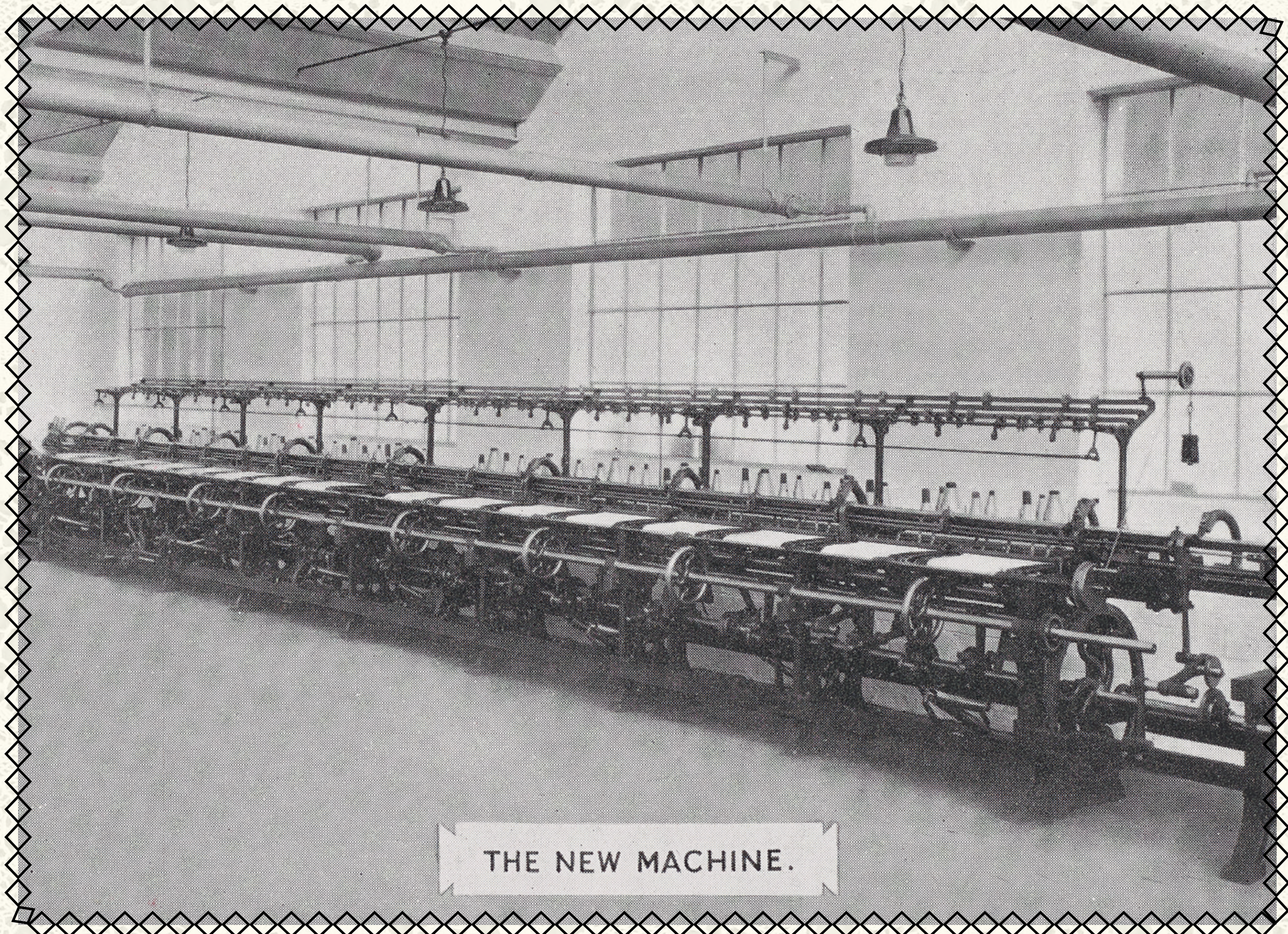
"Yes Sir, we sell Morley's"



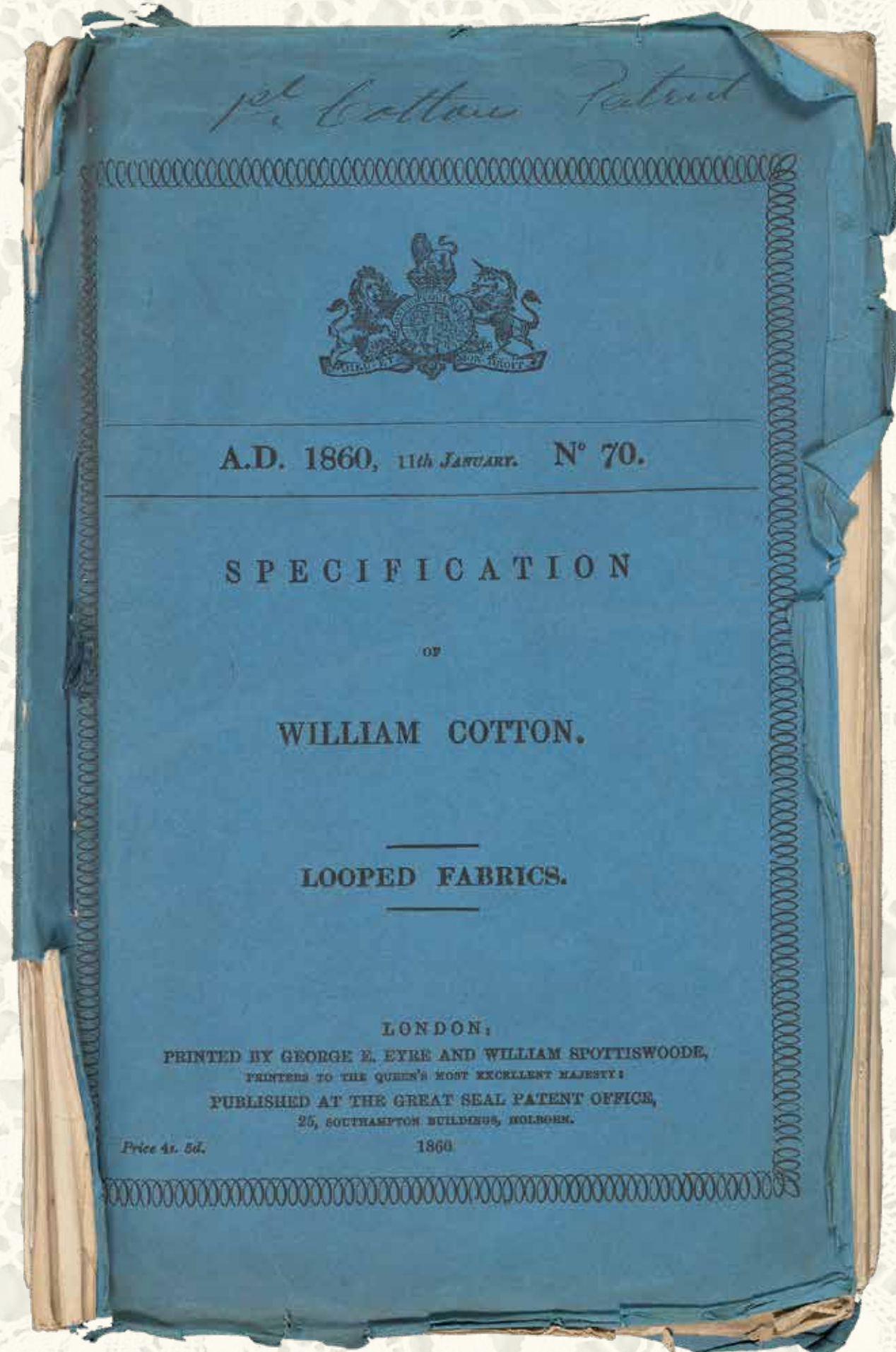
Advert for I & R Morley's Australian-made underwear, 1932. Mrl ACC 2772.



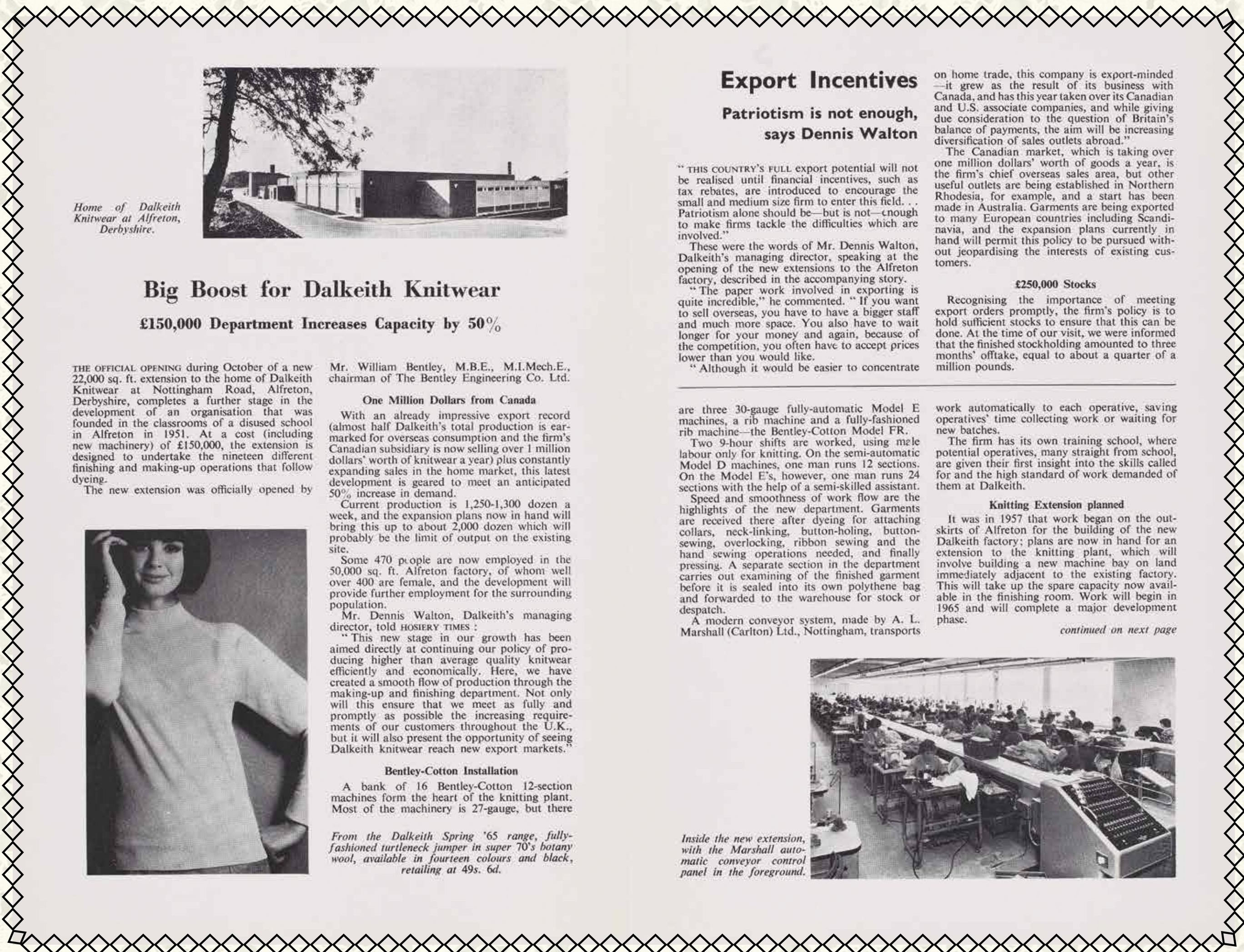
Newspaper cutting from *The Herald*, 1928. Mrl ACC 2772.



Yarns: *The magazine of the House of Brettle*, Vol 1, no 1, 1929. BBE ACC 1532.



William Cotton's first patent, 1860. BBE ACC 1532.



Article from *Hosiery Times*, 1964. BDA 11/1/1.