



Forging the fashion

Discover how some surprising items of clothing started their life in the British Isles

From the trenches to the catwalk

Our wet weather makes us experts on raincoats. Scottish chemist Charles Macintosh created the first waterproof material in 1823 by bonding fabric with rubber. While the rubber was an effective rain guard, it smelt unpleasant when warm. Inventor Thomas Hancock helped Macintosh to rectify the problem, enabling the Scotsman to produce 'macs' with a revolutionary fabric. British brands Burberry and Aquascutum supplied World War One officers with their superior weather-shielding coats, creating the term 'trench coat'. The style has since been worn by everyone from TV detectives and Hollywood film stars to 1980s yuppies and everyone else keen to look stylish while keeping dry.

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TRENCH COAT

THE MOST RELIABLE MILITARY WATERPROOF PRODUCED.

Lined Wool. Detachable Fleece, Fur, or Leather. Absolutely proof against Rain and Cold Winds.

From the Lieut.-Col. Commanding Lowland Battalion in France

"I should like you to know I have given one of your Aquascutums a very severe six months' trench warfare. I have nothing but praise for the rain resisting quality from several glaringly inferior capped coats of two years. I have had to wear them far as durability and appearance not look as if I were wearing you for a renewal of time."

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The Coat that Officers who have worn during the cold...

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Dressing for tea

Our nation's favourite beverage even has a dress style named after it. The popular tea dress links back to the British custom of taking afternoon tea, which started in 1841. The new social activity required a new form of dress that met etiquette standards but was comfortable to wear, resulting in a looser-fitting 'tea gown'. Over time, the tea gown became the tea dress worn for tea dances. In the 1940s, when wartime rationing influenced fashion, the tea dress was favoured, as it required little fabric. It remains a much-loved style regularly seen on the high street and catwalks, royalty and TV personalities.



GIVE IT SOME WELLY!

In addition to waterproof macs, it is no surprise that temperate Britain also gave rise to a waterproof boot. Toddlers, gardeners, farmers and festivalgoers are among those who choose wellies as practical footwear for work or play. We can thank the First Duke of Wellington for his eponymous boots. In the early 19th century, he asked his shoemaker to modify his leather boots to fit closer to the leg and without a tassel, creating the first wellington boot. The leather was later replaced with rubber, giving us the waterproof boots we wear today.





Smart in tartan

Loved by the late fashion designers Alexander McQueen and Vivienne Westwood, the kilt is now not only an important item of Scottish identity, heritage and pride, but also a garment that has graced catwalks and high streets worldwide. Originally worn in the Highlands only, the kilt's origins date as far back as the Middle Ages, when clansmen tucked and belted woollen cloaks around their bodies. In the aftermath of the Jacobite Rebellion, which ended at Culloden in 1746, the wearing of tartan cloth, kilts and trousers was banned outside of the British Army or its veterans for 36 years, but became fashionable soon after the ban was repealed in 1782. Today, more than 3,500 varieties or setts of the famous criss-cross design are registered with The Scottish Registry of Tartans.



BRILLIANT BLAZERS

As an island nation, seafaring has definitely influenced our fashion. The blazer is a prime example, perhaps owing its origins to the ship *HMS Blazer*, whose crew wore blue and white striped jackets. The popularity of the jacket style grew as it was adopted by university rowers, with the colourful striped designs helping to identify the different teams. Blazer wearing by royal style icons, such as Princess Diana during the 1980s, and Catherine, Princess of Wales today, have cemented the blazer's long-standing appeal as a stylish garment – perfect for adding instant sophistication to an outfit.

IF THE CAP FITS

In an advert now voted Britain's most iconic, the Hovis delivery boy wears a baker boy hat, instantly signifying country living and the North of England (although it was actually filmed in Dorset). The peaked woollen caps recently enjoyed a revival thanks to the popularity of the TV series *Peaky Blinders*. However, they are just one relative of the legendary British flat cap – perhaps the ultimate classless item of clothing, equally at home on a Scottish

grouse moor or a market stall in the East End of London. While worn by choice today, woollen caps were mandatory between 1571 and 1597, when the English Parliament decreed that all non-noble males over the age of six must wear a woollen cap on Sundays and holidays in a bid to support the wool trade.



WORDS: MICHELLE ROWLEY, PHOTOS: ALAMY, GETTY, SHUTTERSTOCK