

Dressed to Kill

How we dress for our sport defines us amongst the myriad British pastimes. Looking the part may not make you a better shot, but if you get it wrong you will feel awkward all day. *Shooting Gazette* talks to leading figures in the rural retail industry about how to dress for the peg.

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Illustration: **Bryn Parry**



To the peg and back again: dressing the travelling gun

You've been invited to back-to-back days on a large estate for the first time. What should you take besides your shotgun? How much is too much? Niels Van Rooyen, creative director at Holland & Holland, helps you to pack your things.

Preparing the luggage

Regardless of the time of the season, your attire should be practical and water resistant to keep you comfortable and warm. Luggage has to be kept to a minimum on a trip like this. If it's a two-night stay it's best to double up on every item of clothing – and to keep

“A gun should always be traditional in the way they dress; never wear garish colours or an ensemble where everything is identical.”

one eye on the weather forecast to avoid packing unnecessary items. The main item of luggage should be a medium or large lightweight holdall. If you can't get your Wellingtons inside then take a boot bag too. It is better to fold any trousers, shirts or jackets and place them in your luggage than carry them on a suit hanger. Garments that will eventually be hung should be kept separate from everything else in the holdall. Clothing should be wrapped in non-toxic tissue paper to prevent creasing. If possible, shirts should go in sealable bags and ties in individual sleeves.

Attire for the journey

Wear a tweed jacket or a blazer, moleskin or corduroy trousers (jacket and trousers should always be medium weight), Churchill-style shoes with a rubber medway grip sole, a brushed cotton shirt with cashmere mix along with a silk tie and a coat if required: all very smart, all very presentable. It would be sartorial suicide to arrive in shorts, denim or a camouflaged shooting jacket.

Attire for the shoot day

If it is cold or wet during the shoot day then naturally wear a shooting coat, if it's mild pack a shooting vest and a jumper to go underneath. Whatever the conditions the shirt should always be a brushed cotton Tattersall and if you're

not wearing breeks then at least ensure the trousers are of the tweed style. If not wearing Wellingtons, a high ankle boot with a rubber medway grip sole is the best choice of footwear. Depending on the weather, gloves should be waterproof, have something like a Kevlar lining for comfort or possess a technical fabric for better grip. Feel free to add a degree of quirkiness by showing a little flash of colour on the garter, but go for a stocking that suits the outfit. A gun should always be traditional in the way they dress; never, ever wear garish colour or an ensemble where the pattern of every garment – cap, waistcoat, breeks, waistcoat etc. – is identical.

Attire for the evening

If it's a smart affair in the evenings but not black tie then it's back to a tweed jacket or a blazer. Flannel trousers complement these well and it's better than putting the trousers from the journey back on. Wear a plain shirt and a silk tie, perhaps with tasselled loafers to complete the outfit – these should be leather rather than suede. 🦋

Holland & Holland offers a bespoke wardrobe service for sporting trips. All Holland & Holland tweeds are produced in England and are exclusive to the company. For more information on the service visit www.hollandandholland.com



Pack the right kit and you will enjoy your shoot days even more.

Don't put your foot in it

The British landscape can be treacherous whatever the time of the season, so the correct footwear is crucial for the best comfort and protection.



For the journey
Countrymaster II GTX shoes by brasher
RRP £130
www.brasher.co.uk

On the stubbles
Tatra GTX boots
by Hanwag
RRP £190
www.hanwag.de



For the grouse butt
Ilkley brogues by Barbour
RRP £159
www.barbour.com

On difficult ground
Pro Hunter GTX 12" boots by Härkila
£259.99
www.harkilauk.co.uk



When it's wet, muddy or freezing
Parcour 2 Vario boots
by Aigle
RRP £130
www.aigle.com



Vierzonord boots by Le Chateau
RRP £165
www.gmk.co.uk

Balmoral Hawksworth boots by Hunter
RRP £285
www.hunter-boot.com

My kingdom for a coat!

With so many different coats on the market it's hard to know which will serve you best in the unpredictable British weather. Dress for the conditions, as they say.



When it's warm but wet
Sporting Featherweight jacket by Barbour
RRP £229
www.barbour.com



Woodcock jacket by Seeland
RRP £149.99
www.seelanduk.co.uk

When it's wet and windy
Helmsley jacket by Alan Paine
RRP £239.99
www.alanpaine.co.uk

When the weather is severe or unpredictable
Pro Hunter X jacket by Härkila
RRP £439.99
www.harkilauk.co.uk



On the unforgiving moor and hillside
MacNab jacket by Musto
RRP £250
www.musto.com



When the wind gets up
St. James's Tweed shooting coat by William Evans
RRP £595
www.williamevans.com



How to dress to your shape and personality

It is always much better to blend in on shoot day than be too ostentatious, especially if you want to avoid being the one with all the gear and no idea. Tailor **Gerry Durkin** offers his suggestions on how to dress within yourself.

Subtlety is key to slimming

Unless you want to look like Billy Bunter, a gun with broad shoulders and/or a rotund stomach should avoid thick bright checks on their jacket and breeks.

Mind your plus twos and fours...

Whether they are 6' 6" or 5' 5" a male gun should only wear plus fours. Plus twos are fine to stand in and might make the shorter gun look taller but they are also very restrictive. Being so tight around the legs they are not the best when negotiating stiles or walking long distances because there is no crotch. Plus fours are more elegant because they offer plenty of legroom and a lower crotch.

...and avoid the Velcro

When choosing plus fours look for those with elasticated cuffing on the bottom. These can be tucked into your stockings, are more comfortable than a button/buckle fastening (which will stab at your ankle) and won't come apart easily like Velcro fastenings.

Don't get shirty!

Taller guns should buy shirts with a long body with 36" sleeves. Comfort is key and there is nothing worse than showing off one's shirt or, worse, the stomach, when reaching for those high birds. Cotton or twill Tattersall shirts (or plain blue or white shirts) are best.

Collar call

Whatever the shape of your face, the most elegant choice of shirt collar is the semi-cutaway. This deep collar will keep your neck warm and allows you to wear

a full Windsor knot. This knot will keep its shape throughout the day and always looks neat.

Avoid irritation

Consider a cravat before a tie for those early season days. The cravat should always be silk rather than polyester because synthetics irritate your neck if you are perspiring or haven't shaved.

Be conservative on ties

Ties with shooting motifs are more conservative than those with stripes and polkadots that make you look like you've just come out of the office.

Which waistcoat?

Like shirts, a waistcoat should be long in the body to avoid showing off the shirt. A burgundy, lovat or mustard coloured waistcoat is a safe choice whatever your size because it is a country colour.

Be brief on shoes and boots

Lace-up brown brogue shoes or boots with a golf sole will be your best friend in a grouse butt because of the comfort and grip they offer. Whatever the colour of your legwear your Wellington boots should be dark green.

Ladies, always remember your dignity

Ladies have the luxury of shooting skirts and breeks on shoot day. A skirt should always go below the knee because anything shorter would not be very ladylike and could be overly revealing when negotiating stiles etc. 🦌

Gerry Durkin is a tailor based in the north west of England. Tel. 07530 384982.

A female eye on field fatigues

Three leading figures in rural clothing retail delve into their respective stockrooms to select stylish and practical must-haves for lady guns.

Cordings

Hillary Becque, marketing director at Cordings of Piccadilly, says: "The Wincanton waistcoat is stylish and very flattering, while the Wincanton hat is smart, practical and a knock out teamed with the matching breeks."

The Wincanton waistcoat and Wincanton hat by Cordings
RRP £99 (waistcoat) and £50 (hat)
www.cordings.co.uk



William & Son

Magda Kolodziejczyk, head buyer and designer at William & Son, says: "This stylish Burnham field jacket is perfect for a day in the field or a long country walk. Beautiful wool lining ensures you stay warm and adds a smart hidden detail. The scarf is made from finest Scottish cashmere. Carefully selected check colours will make for timeless investment."

Burnham field jacket and block check scarf by William & Son
RRP £660 (jacket) and £165 (scarf)
www.williamandson.com



Barbour

Helen Barbour, head of Barbour Sporting, says: "The Clover waistcoat is one of my favourites. In a smart British Mallalieu tweed, it's tailored, easy to wear and very versatile. To accompany it is the Annandale cartridge bag in the same tweed - it's both smart and functional and the two complement each other very well."

Clover waistcoat and Annandale cartridge bag by Barbour
RRP £169 (waistcoat) and £199 (cartridge bag)
www.barbour.com



Going bespoke?

What to ask your tailor when ordering a bespoke shooting suit, and what they should ask you.

The first meeting with your tailor is arguably the most important stage in the creation of a bespoke shooting suit. It is here that you will discuss fabrics, your shooting habits and, of course, how you can look your best. Jeremy Beaumont, a keen shot and tailor who opened Rhodes Wood in Harrogate in 1997, discusses their approach and addresses the key questions both parties should ask (and why).

QUESTIONS TO THE TAILOR

Which tweeds can I choose from?

Most of our tweeds come from Scotland. We start at an 11oz. grouse weight, a tightly woven worsted tweed that is still cool enough for the summer months. Our heaviest is the 28oz. stalking quality tweed, which is so strong you can slide down a hill in it.

How long will it take to have a three-piece shooting suit made?

If we do it entirely by hand it would take anywhere between three to four months after the first consultation with the customer. Five weeks after the first consultation, the customer will come in for a fitting involving a rough basted garment. Here we will assess how it looks and gauge the customer's opinions on fit/comfort etc. Any adjustments will then be marked up and the garment taken apart and finished.

I enjoy my shoot day hospitality, how can I ensure the suit fits come the end of the season?

All of our handmade garments have good inlays that allow room for adjustment. I always recommend that customers wear braces as opposed to belts for their plus twos, threes and fours, and that they have them cut on the loose side so that when they are walking, driving or eating they stay put.

Will you keep my measurements?

When you make a suit it's a snapshot in time. The tailor should keep a customer's individual measurements for their records. If you were to call us in four years' time after having a suit made we would prefer to see you again. There are guns who try to keep in shape and those who live a more hedonistic lifestyle, so I would rather see them personally.

What is the difference between plus twos, threes and fours?

It is essential that you and indeed the tailor understand the difference between the various forms of legwear. Plus fours are long, full fitting, often baggy breeches cut so they will hang (bagging over the tops of shooting stockings) by four inches. They are measured four inches below the knee and then four inches is added on plus another one-and-a-half to two inches for the band fastening - nine-and-a-half to 10 inches in total below the knee when hanging straight. They are then brought up and pouched over the top of the shooting stockings. These should be worn over the calf fastening although many prefer to wear the tops of their socks underneath the fastening of the plus fours. Plus fours are cut wide at the knee and generally suit a taller figure. Plus threes are measured in a similar way but with three inches below the knee, plus twos with two inches etc.

How much work can be done on a suit within its lifetime?

If a customer has lost one to two stone in weight then the alternations should be small. If the customer has lost any more than that we can chip the shoulders and reset the sleeves but it's a big job that involves taking the suit apart, re-cutting it and then putting it back together. The customer will have to ask themselves if they're better off



Jeremy Beaumont, keen shot and co-founder of Rhodes Wood in Harrogate.

having a new suit made. Altering their old one requires the same amount of work as making a new suit and all they are saving is the cost of the cloth.

How long will my shooting suit last assuming I take 30 days a season?

If it's a 17oz. worsted twist tweed you should get 10 years' worth of wear from it. Bespoke clothing is not indestructible and needs to be looked after. It should be kept on a hanger in a zip up suit bag, allowed to dry naturally if wet and taken to a good dry cleaner.

QUESTIONS TO THE CUSTOMER

How often will you wear the suit?

This is massively important as it relates to the strength of material we will use to create the suit. If the customer will be doing a lot of walking then it is important that the yarn is twisted, making for a much springier and tighter weave which will keep the customer dry and will stand up to the wear. If the customer is comfortable

in a heavyweight tweed in August or a lightweight tweed in November they can wear the one shooting suit all season long. Generally, most customers doing a lot of shooting will have two suits made to meet the demands of the weather.

Do you actually want to shoot in your shooting jacket?

The majority of people shooting today will only wear their shooting jacket in the bar at the end of the day, but for those customers who want to shoot in theirs we will need to cut the sleeve with a forward allowance to allow the gun to come up into the shoulder cleanly. A pivot sleeve, a diamond insert or concertina under the armpit also allows for greater freedom of movement.

Have you shot before?

If the shooting suit is for an experienced shot, he's probably got a handle of the kind of thing others on the shoot are wearing. But sometimes newcomers to shooting want very bold with big checks in order to make a statement. This can be a bit of a faux pas, attracting whispered comments about 'new money' etc. This can lead to problems which could easily have been avoided with some good initial advice.

Have you thought about pockets?

If the customer is shooting in the jacket and is not carrying a cartridge bag, or does not have a loader they might want to have a bellows pocket fitted. The customer might also want to consider a discreet pocket within which to carry their shotgun certificate or even a little fob pocket specifically for the keeper's tip. The hand the gun uses to shoot with is also taken into consideration. 🦅

Two-piece bespoke shooting suits at Rhodes Wood start from £900. Tel. 01423 505878 or alternatively visit www.rhodes-wood.co.uk