

SIMPLE STYLE

THE RAINCOAT

Words: **CLARE GOGERTY**

Raincoats are all about practicality. A half-hearted 'showerproof fabric' that looks fashionable, but which renders you soggy in half an hour will not do. What is needed is a roomy, lightweight and, above all, waterproof coat that you can shrug on over your PJs as you trudge out into a downpour to walk the dog.

Sailors and fishermen know this only too well. When choosing workwear, being constantly lashed by pounding waves and battered by storms, sharpens the mind. Fortunately, in 1898 a New Zealand resident called Edward Le Roy fashioned a weather-resistant yet breathable garment from worn-out sailcloth coated with a mixture of linseed oil and wax. Modern versions of this 'oilskin' are made from a flexible PVC-coated synthetic fabric and are frequently sported with trousers known as 'bibs' that come right up to the armpits.

Us landlubbers don't need such sturdy clothing, but we can be inspired by the mariners' choice of waterproof: many raincoats exist in jolly colours (fisherman's yellow is a favourite), which – with a hood or matching sou'wester – keep you dry and, at a push, can even be called stylish.

Raincoats aren't, however, always suitable for the daily commute. They don't



“A mackintosh: as equally waterproof as a raincoat, but tailored and belted”

work worn over office clothes, lack warmth and will drip annoyingly over fellow travellers. Fortunately, modern life with its dash between the cover of home, transport, and the office, means that the opportunity for a good soaking is minimised, and reduced further with the addition of an umbrella, pesky and anti-social as it is.

Commuters can, instead, plump for a mackintosh: as equally waterproof as a raincoat, but tailored and belted so suitable for arrival at your place of work. The first mackintosh was created in 1824 following the patent of 'Indian rubber cloth' by a Scottish chemist, Charles Macintosh. Tartan-lined with waterproofed seams and eyelets in the armpits, these rubberised coats caught on quickly, first with the army, railway workers and the police, then eventually reaching the rest of us. Now upmarket brands like Gucci, Hermès and Burberry produce their own, costly, versions. All of which are jolly nice, but are they really the garb you'd want to don to splash through puddles during an April shower? Probably not. You'll want a thoroughly practical and not necessarily stylish raincoat to enjoy that particular pleasure. Which is why they will always have a place in our spring wardrobe. S

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THREE DONE WELL



Shoreside waterproof A-line coat in Poppy | £89.95

Stand-out-from-the-crowd and the clouds in this waterproof. joules.com



Half-zip hooded anorak in Brilliant Yellow | £69.95

What grey skies? You'll see only sunshine in this sunny coat. gap.co.uk



Coverack coat in Nickel | £140

Does for dog-walking downpours or soggy school runs. seasalt.co.uk