

Kit crunch

The best of British weather beaters

Sophia Gallia tests some waterproof coats from British companies.

WHERE DOES ONE FIND A QUALITY COAT TO use for stalking, shooting, beating and other outdoor activities? It also needs stand up to the worst of British weather, be lightweight, blend with the surroundings and not be too noisy. After much searching and disappointment, I found what I believe was an excellent choice and there are a number of manufacturers who have perfected products to meet such stringent criteria.

Britain has a strong tradition of good quality sporting clothing so, rather than test too many products that would baffle readers, I opted for three provided by British companies: the Barbour Linhope; Musto's Munro jacket and the lesser known Malin. I admit to having tested the Barbour and Musto for only a year, but I'm on my second Malin, the first one of which I bought some 10 years ago.

All of these coats are excellent quality and if you choose any one of them, you are unlikely to be disappointed.

A few caveats first, they are not truly comparable with one another – each has a different focus and target buyer.

How nice to find the Barbour Ladies Linhope (pictured below, centre), one of few coats truly tailored for the female figure. As a result this is much the smartest of the three coats and the one that I wear when I need to be tidy and dry at the same time. With bellow pockets and shoulder padding it is clearly designed for ladies who shoot. My main gripe with this coat is that I am a size 14 at most, but even the size 16 is on the small side and there is a definite restriction when lifting ones arm to shooting position. Of course, you would risk losing the feminine tailored look by getting a couple of sizes above your normal one, though that would be my advice. It also comes in a men's version, which has slightly different features.

The Musto Pro-tweed Munro (pictured below, left) is an unusual jacket. Clearly

made for the stalking market, it's made of Gore-tex to look like tweed, smacking of Rupert the Bear! A clever idea and one that you'd think would have been thought of long ago. There are some irritations, however, particularly for stalking use: there is a strap on the hood which sticks up – the deer may see that however good your stomach crawl. It's the noisiest coat of the three and shines most when it gets wet. Other than those points, it's well thought out, inventive and the slightly odd tweed look grew on me.

The made-to-measure Malin (pictured below, right), which is made of 100% closely woven cotton (ventile) is my choice of the three. It's not the most glamorous coat, I admit, but it really has it all when it comes to practicality. There are no unnecessary 'frills', but each feature is well thought out and functional. Take the drop down seat, for example. What an ingenious way of keeping your bum dry while eating your piece in

From left: the Barbour Ladies Linhope; the Musto Pro-Tweed Munro; the Malin.



At a glance

	Barbour	Musto	Malin
MODEL TESTED	Ladies Linhope.	Musto Pro-Tweed Munro.	Malin jacket in 'parph' colour.
WARMTH	Fleece-lined.	Optional zip-in waistcoat.	Space for layers beneath.
NOISE (1=very noisy, 5=silent)	3	2	4
CAMOUFLAGE	Olive colour blends in some situations. Does not shine.	Tweed effect is designed to blend, but coat shines when wet.	Colours available to match situation. Darker when wet. Does not shine.
OVERALL LOOK	Smart and stylish, feminine.	Unusual, clever.	Functional.
EXTERNAL POCKETS	2 cartridge, 2 hand warmer.	2 cartridge, 2 hand warmer.	2 cartridge, 2 hand warmer.
INTERNAL POCKETS	2 zipped wallet.	1 zipped wallet.	2 poacher's, 1 zipped wallet.
HOOD	Not available.	Included, detachable.	Optional (sized for hat to be worn beneath), detachable.
RECOMMENDED RETAIL PRICE	£279.95 (ladies and lightweight mens); £349.95 mens Endurance 3-in-1).	£380.	£360.
OTHER FEATURES	Adjustable back belt, flap retainers for cartridge pockets.	Flap retainers for cartridge pockets.	Draw cord storm collar, integral drop-down seat flap.
EASE OF MOVEMENT	Articulated for shooting, but slightly restrictive.	Not overly generous.	Generous.
LADIES VERSION?	Yes (as tested).	No.	No, but made-to-measure.
WEIGHT *½ hour in steady rain	Dry= 1kg; Wet* = 1.1kg.	Dry= 1.1kg; Wet* = 1.3kg.	Dry= 1.2kg; Wet* = 1.3kg.
MATERIAL	Polyamide/Cordura.	Gore-Tex.	Double layer ventile.
WAITING TIME	Off the peg.	Off the peg.	Three weeks.
SIZES AVAILABLE	Ladies 8-18.	Men S-XXXL.	According to measurements.
COLOURS AVAILABLE	Olive.	Printed tweed.	Parph (dark sand), Ruwenzori (grey green), Tundra (grey brown), Jungle (dark green).
MACHINE WASHABLE	Ordinary wash.	Ordinary wash.	Special instructions for machine washing.
AVAILABILITY	Stockists countrywide.	Stockists countrywide.	Mail order from Malin UK.
FURTHER INFORMATION	www.barbour.co.uk	www.musto.co.uk	www.malinuk.com



ALL PICTURES SOPHIA GALLIA

horizontal West Coast rain! In the wet, is marginally the heaviest of the three when saturated. This is because the cotton fibres expand when wet making the fabric impermeable. The two capacious inside pockets are plenty enough to hold lunch, a pheasant or the hood when not required. A storm collar (alternative to the optional hood) really does prevent rain going down the neck, and the cuffs work in the same way. It comes in a variety of colours to suit the terrain you're likely to be in.

All in all, these were three excellent coats from British companies – support them if you can this winter!

Photographs showing features – from top: Barbour cartridge pocket; Barbour belt; Musto cartridge pocket; Musto inside pocket and lining; Malin cartridge pocket; Malin storm collar.