

Active travel to school

Wonderful Welly Trivia

So what exactly are wellies?

- Wellies are also known by many other names.
- In Australia, South Africa and New Zealand they are known as Gumboots
- In Ireland they are often referred to as Topboots
- In Russia they are known as Rubberboots.



Where did the idea for wellies come from?

Wellies were first worn by Arthur Wellesley, 1st Duke of Wellington, and were based upon the Hessian boot. The Duke of Wellington had instructed his shoemaker to re-design the Hessian boot to make it more hard wearing and give extra comfort. This was the birth of the good old welly as we know it, before long everyone referred to the Duke's new boots as 'the Wellington.'

The Duke of Wellington's style caught on quickly and many other British gentlemen copied the style. The Wellington was considered very fashionable during the 1840's but at this stage was only made in leather.

When wellies met rubber

In 1852 two gentlemen by the names of Hiram Hutchinson and Charles Goodyear came together. Charles Goodyear had recently developed a process to cure rubber, called Vulcanization, and both individuals benefited from this new process.

Charles Goodyear took his research into the tyre manufacturing market, whilst Hiram Hutchinson went into footwear.

Hutchinson launched his footwear idea in France with a company called Aigle (meaning Eagle) His rubber footwear became a huge success here, with farmers very grateful to have their feet clean and dry for once. It sure beat the clogs they had been wearing!

Rubber comes from the sap of the Hevea Tree and is actually a natural product, contrary to the beliefs of many.



Welly Olympics?

And you thought wellies were just for wearing on your feet?! Not true.

In the UK there is a sport called Welly Wanging. Welly Wanging originated in Yorkshire and each year a championship Welly Wanging competition is held where competitors have to throw a welly as far as they can within the boundaries. They can do this from a standing or running start.



The UK is not the only one's who partake in this sport either. Competitions are also regularly held in New Zealand and Finland.

And then we have the welly boot dance, which is rumoured to have been performed by African Miners in order to keep their spirits up whilst working in poor conditions.

Welly music

Yes, a few musicians have even wrote about wellies, and none sticks in my mind more than Billy Connolly who wrote the great little ditty 'If it wasnae for yer wellies'

Festival Fashion Emergency

At the 2014 Glastonbury festival a welly emergency was declared when suppliers of wellies and local shops experienced great demand for the welly boot. However, Oxfam seized the opportunity by bringing a supply of 1000 pairs to help out those in need.

Wonderful Fact - Who is the biggest manufacturer of Rubber Boots.....you'll never guess!

None other than Nokia, the mobile phone giant. Nokia recently sold it's footwear division, stating it was the biggest rubber boot manufacturer in Western Europe.

Wellies today

Today wellies have become a very popular footwear choice for many. Designers have brought out the best in the good old welly boot and it is hard to walk down a high street these days without seeing many colourful displays of wellies for men, ladies and children.

Celebrities have also caught on to the rising fashion with the likes of Kate Moss, Mary Kate and Ashley Olsen, Kimberley Stewart, Katherine Jenkins and even Dame Shirley Bassey getting in on the act of welly boot fashion. However, Dame Shirley Bassey was the one to really top the bill with her diamanté encrusted wellies which were rumoured to have cost a startling £3000.

With Music Festivals like Glastonbury and the V Festival becoming more popular, the trend in wellies looks set to continue. New welly designs are much sought after, bringing the good old Wellington Boot firmly back into fashion. Just like the good old days of the old Duke.