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The Prince holds up a piece of tweed. 'That's my overcoat!' He looks up at the paper patterns hanging from racks, like laundry. 'So when you drop off the perch, so does the pattern?'



Above the Prince and Mr Hitchcock with apprentice

called on to effect repairs to an old suit than to run up a new one. An example: some years ago, the Prince sent a suit with frayed cuffs for repair. Mr Hitchcock improvised a turned-back cuff. Recently, visiting Waitrose with his wife, Mr Hitchcock picked up a copy of *Waitrose Weekend* and was surprised to see a picture of the Prince wearing the

says, 'and I said, "We have a little bit left over, sir, but it's not enough to make anything." The Jack Russell was running around. I said, "Shall I make the dog a coat?" He said, "Well, measure him up if you can get hold of him." So we cut a little pattern out, put some Velcro underneath, and the dog wore it when they were out walking.'

The Prince knows about tailoring, and he knows about cloth. In 2008, alarmed at the state of the woollen industry, and in particular at the plight of sheep farmers, who find it can cost more to shear a sheep than they make from the wool, he founded the Campaign for Wool, to encourage manufacturers, designers and retailers to use and promote wool products. In 2010, to promote the campaign, Savile Row was turfed over to host a flock of grazing sheep, tended by two farmers dressed in Anderson & Sheppard bespoke wool suits (not an item, it must be said, that would be found in the wardrobe of many sheep farmers).

The increasing use of synthetic fabrics over the past 30 years has hit the wool industry hard. In Britain the number of sheep for breeding use has fallen from 25 million to about 14 million – millions were slaughtered following the foot and mouth outbreaks of 2001 and 2007 – and in Australia, the world's largest producer of wool, from 200 million to 70 million.

The campaign has had a considerable effect in promoting design competitions at colleges, encouraging fashion houses to utilise wool and retailers to promote it. In 2011 the volume of wool spun in British mills was up 12 per cent on the previous year, and the fall in the numbers of breeding sheep has been arrested as farmers begin increasing the size of their flocks to meet rising demand.

'What's amazing is how much time the Prince puts into the campaign, and how well informed he is,' says Nicholas Coleridge, the managing director of Condé Nast UK and vice-chairman of the Campaign for Wool. 'The wool industry can hardly believe their luck, because they've been fighting very hard for years, and they're up against formidable competition in these enormous multinational synthetics companies. It's a long supply chain from the farmers in Cumbria to Topshop, but Prince Charles has talked to everybody. We've had a number of meetings at Clarence House where we'll invite, say, 24 people, and they all come along because it's him. He'll give a very moving and well-informed speech and ask them to help with the campaign – and they do what he asks!' It's the Prince Charles effect.