

A woman with long dark hair, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt, a brown and green plaid sash, and a blue and green plaid skirt, is walking towards the camera. She is carrying a small white lamb with black markings on its face and legs in her left arm. In her right hand, she holds a wooden handle and a metal bucket. She is wearing black rubber boots. To her right, a black and white Border Collie dog is walking. The background shows a stone wall on the left, a wooden fence, and a green hillside in the distance.

A sense of style

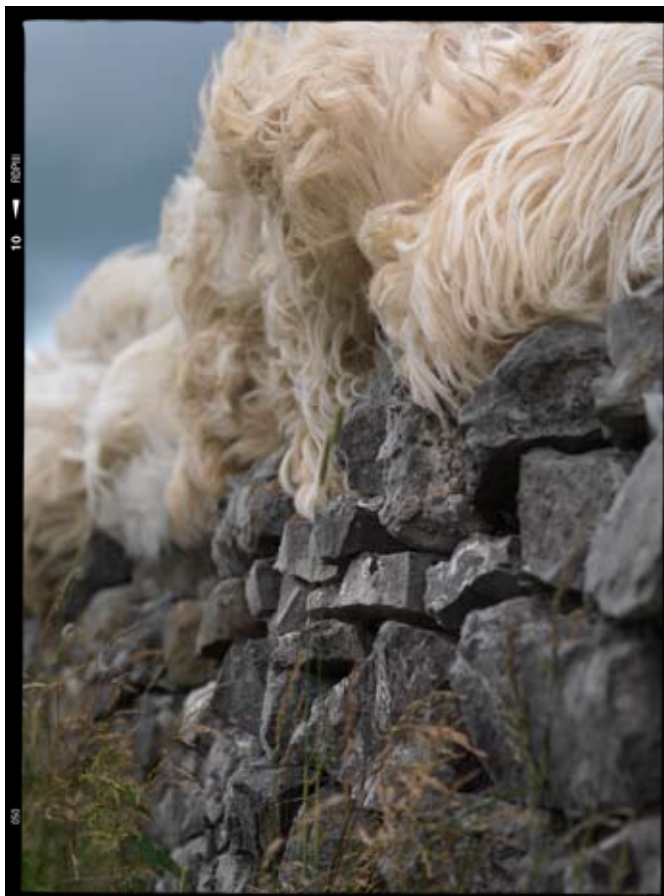
ALISON O'NEILL, sheperdess, has created
an inspiring look for her days on the fells

"I wear tweed all year-round, in all weathers,"

Alison says. She has a vast selection of jackets, coats and suits, including old favourites and her own designs, made up by dressmakers near her family farm overlooking the Howgill Fells in Cumbria. Her favourite workwear is a three-piece Herdwick suit – the light, natural hues a contrast to the traditional dark colours once associated with tweed: "I like fitted jackets and short skirts for walking, teamed with my own range of Herdwick socks, which never fall down." ▷

OPPOSITE White long-sleeved shirt, from a selection, George at Asda. Harris tweed scarf (tied around waist, top), £15, Harris Tweed and Knitwear. Wool and cashmere scarf, from a selection, Johnstons of Elgin. Tiered tartan wool skirt, from a selection, Next. Wellingtons, £39.95, Hunter. Shepherd's crook, similar from Abbeyhorn ▷

PHOTOGRAPHS BY IAN LAWSON
WORDS BY KITTY CORRIGAN



ABOVE Blue and green check cotton **overshirt**, £55, Laura Ashley. 'Cluer' tweed **skirt**, £165, Alison O'Neill. Cashmere **jumper**, from a selection. IT Designs. **Brooch**, from a selection, Hebridean Jewellery. Leather **belt**, similar from Barbour. **Boots**, from a selection, Boden. LEFT Harris tweed men's **jacket**, £7, eBay; similar from Ardanish. Red check cotton **overshirt**, from a selection, Peacocks. Wool **jumper**, from a selection, Laura Ashley. Three-quarter length walking **trousers**, similar from Millets. Wellingtons, £29.50, Hawkshead. OPPOSITE All details as before ►



"I come from a long line of strong women to whom it was natural to clip a sheep and then bake a cake."

Alison built up her 200-strong flock, bred for wool, not meat, over seven years when she returned to the Sedbergh area after 18 years' travelling and working in England and Europe: "A farmer who knew my grandparents lent me a ram to help me get started." She walks up to 20 miles a day with her Rough Fell sheep and dogs Lily and Tweed. "I couldn't live without my Brasher Supalites," she adds. "I get through about two pairs a year." ▸

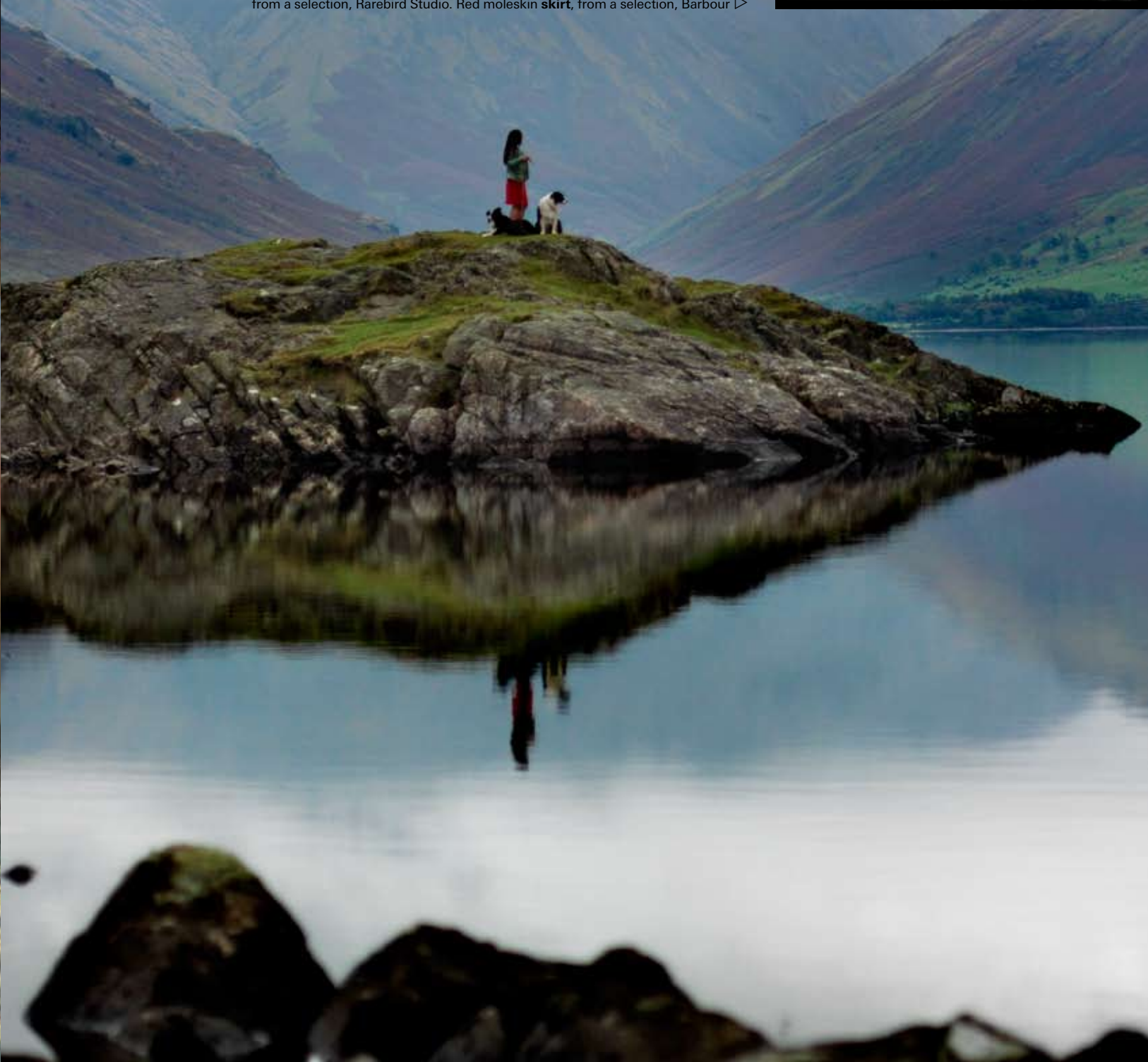




"One well-made suit will last a lifetime and give a much needed boost to a traditional craft, but finding a bargain online brings pleasure, too."

The smartest shepherd on the fells, Alison wears her suits with cashmere cardigans found in charity shops. But it can be hard to make a living from a rented hill farm, so four years ago she diversified into walking holidays; her latest offering is barefoot rambles over meadows and through streams.▷

OPPOSITE Red check **overshirt**, as before. Wool **waistcoat**, from a selection. Brora. Harris tweed **jacket**, similar from Katherine Hooker. Harris tweed **skirt**, from a selection, Harris Tweed and Knitwear, Woollen **gloves**, £6.50, Eden Farm Supplies. Handknit Herdwick **socks**, £65, to order, Alison O'Neill. **Boots**, £130, Brasher Supalite. THIS PAGE, INSET 'Cluer' Harris tweed **waistcoat**, £145, Alison O'Neill. **Jacket**, from a selection, Ness. Harris tweed and feather **bag**, from a selection, Rarebird Studio. Red moleskin **skirt**, from a selection, Barbour ▷





ABOVE LEFT Fairtrade, recycled wool **socks**, from a selection, People Tree. ABOVE RIGHT Handknit wool **scarf**, £40, Alison O'Neill. Handknit, striped wool **cardigan**, from a selection, Ana Balfour at Little Salkeld Watermill. Tweed 'Huisinish' **skirt**, £165, Alison O'Neill. THIS PICTURE 'Machair' tweed **jacket**, similar from Ness. Linen **skirt**, from a selection, The Linen Press ▷



"There's nothing to beat British tweed.
It's light to wear, combats the
elements and is above all comfortable,"

Alison enthuses. "I couldn't be a shepherdess if I wasn't a romantic at heart. Of course I have my head in the clouds. On bleak, cold days on a wet mountain I remember my time behind a desk at the Inland Revenue in the south of England, and appreciate my surroundings here all the more." 🐾

Cowboy **hat**, £7, market find; similar from Barbour. Fair Isle **jumper**, from a selection, Laura Ashley. Harris tweed **scarf**, from a selection, Harris Tweed and Knitwear. Spotty **skirt**, from a selection, Boden. Fairtrade **socks**, as before. **Boots**, Brasher as before. For stockists, see our *Where to Buy* page

Alison O'Neill's three-piece suits come in ten colourways, in windowpane check or herringbone: waistcoat, £145; skirt, £165; jacket, £395; she also sells socks and scarves to order. To commission a piece, or book a walking holiday, call 015396 20134 or visit www.shacklabank.co.uk. Photographs taken from *The Romantic Shepherdess* by Ian Lawson and Alison O'Neill, to be published next year. 🐾