

Words for Babette, from Hilary Dodson

When Andrew asked me if I might be able to say a few words at Babette's funeral I felt very honoured. When he told me that the casket would be turquoise this was no surprise to me as it is a colour I very much associate with her. Colour was important to her and she was also very creative with it.

I was Babette's therapist for 9 years and I remember admiring a colourful bag she had made where the dominant colour was turquoise. She had many talents.

I last spoke to her the Monday before she went into hospital just under 2 weeks before she died. I was talking to her twice a week for some months but I had noticed a change in the preceding 2 weeks. She had always been very bright and on the ball with a good sense of humour until then.

I first met with Babette when she was doing a counselling course. She was searching for something different in her life and a new role in her life having had surgery for breast cancer sometime before starting to see me.

She decided not to complete the course feeling she had done enough. She still hadn't found what it was she was searching for. She knew she wanted a role in the family business but something different. Over time with what she had learnt from the course and about herself through therapy her thinking evolved. What arose from this period was the creation of a very people centred role in the business dealing with any tensions that built up, providing a listening ear to staff when needed and a great deal more. All of this created a happy, supportive and family run business and that shoppers are pleased to visit. I have lived in Cobham for a long time and have regularly shopped in the Cobham shop for cookware long before I knew Babette. Not so long ago Babette happened to be in there when I was wanting a non-stick milk pan. She helped me choose one.

She loved her family and was so proud of you all. In the last weeks when she had gone into hospital for some treatment she had helped others on the ward she was on. When she left they wondered how they would manage without her and she said to them that they would be able to hold on to what they had talked about. This was what she enjoyed doing. She wasn't quite so good at believing she was a deserving cause (something we had to work on). Some weeks later she was worried that she hadn't been able to prepare the family to manage after she was gone. I said to her that perhaps what she had said to the patients on the ward was also true for her family and she seemed to find some peace in that.

I can't quite believe she has gone. When she told me that her cancer was back 2 or 3 years ago and that one of the tumours was triple negative I knew this was not good news. However there was an aspect of her that seemed indestructible which is why it seems almost unbelievable that she has gone. I shall miss her and the way she would tease me sometimes. I feel privileged to have been with her almost to the end of her life. I knew on that Monday she didn't have much time left.

I am pleased that Andrew asked me to say a few words about Babette at this service. It has enabled me to say goodbye to her.

I was very touched when Andrew rang me the day after she died to let me know when it was all so raw and there are no words. It is such a difficult thing to do. I am also grateful to Jeanne who let me know what had happened the day after I had spoken to Babette for the last time.

She will live on in our memories.

9th September 2021