

An Appreciation of Bobbie Cox

generous and patient in her sharing (1930 – 2018)

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I was fortunate, along with members of the East Sussex Guild of Weavers, Spinners and Dyers, to attend three of Bobbie's tapestry weaving courses in the lovely village of Peter Tavy on the edge of Dartmoor.



*Bobbie Cox spinning at her adapted electric spinner.
Photo © Libby Sheen*

The courses were held in the village hall. In the first year, after a short introduction, we walked around the village looking for inspiration. Bobbie helped open my eyes to things I would have missed if I hadn't lifted my gaze to see chimneys, roofs and dormer windows. The theme was a 'diary' of our week in Peter Tavy. There wasn't a defined plan but it evolved as the week went on.

Bobbie was a wonderful teacher, warm, encouraging and non-judgmental. Her comments were always helpful and at the end of the week she found something constructive to say about all our efforts.

The second year's theme was 'keys and locks'! She had some interesting keys and a photocopier, and we could play with the shapes however we liked. There were more walks and a picnic on the moors.

The third year was my favourite because of my personal connection to the theme: the tapestries in the Great Banqueting Hall at Dartington.

An aside: my family moved to Dartington in 1946 and we lived in the courtyard and ate in the huge dining hall with all the community, including the owners. The beauty of the place was extraordinary, and the tapestries — hand-woven, hand-spun and plant-dyed by Elizabeth Peacock — were an amazing addition.

Although I was only eight, the artefacts from India, Africa and China entered my subconscious and over the years influenced many of my tastes and loves.

Back to the course! We drove across the moor for a day at Dartington, having lunch in the dining hall, where Bobbie has two large and magnificent tapestries. We were each given a postcard of a tapestry for inspiration and I swapped with another student as I wanted to work with the poultry tapestry, which is dyed with madder and indigo. I spun some madder and indigo fleece that I had luckily brought with me and was very happy with my finished little work!

A highlight of each course was the last afternoon, when we were all invited to Bobbie and Peter's Devon long house for tea, cake and — joy on joy — a long visit to Bobbie's studio. There she talked about her inspirations, showed her weavings, and explained her elaborate loom, which involved scaffolding and a moveable platform so she could reach her huge works.



*Bobbie Cox 'Meetings Tapestry', Rochester Cathedral.
Photo © Libby Sheen*

Bobbie Cox exhibited all over the UK. Her stunning tapestries are in Rochester Cathedral and in buildings in London and elsewhere. She produced a large and wonderful series of works on the subject of water, inspired by the light on the River Tavy. She was generous and patient in her sharing. Her tapestries were just stunning, and I managed to save up and buy a very small but beautiful one. She sweetly made sure that I could afford it!

I was very sad to hear that she had died.