

# Portrait of a Local Artist

Probably the most famous couple to own one of Nicola Leader's paintings is the Duke and Duchess of York.

When Prince Andrew was stationed at Portland he and Sarah lived at Chideock Manor, then owned by Charlie Weld. When the Duke and Duchess left, Charlie commissioned Nicola Leader, the Bridport artist, to produce a painting of Chideock Manor.

"I had previously been commissioned by Charlie to produce 12 paintings and drawings," recalls Nicola.

Aside from Nicola's obvious talent, her success is in part due to some friends holding a charity art exhibition, when her children were young. "They wanted me to contribute some paintings, which I eventually did and five of the six sold before lunchtime on the preview day. My husband then said: 'Get stuck in you can make some money from this!' We converted the hayloft over the stables here into a studio overlooking the walled garden. And this is where I exhibit."

It was when Nicola was 21 in 1966 that she studied a foundation art course at Bournemouth Art College. "I studied absolutely everything you can imagine from sculpture to printmaking but there was no training whatsoever in watercolours. And this is what I wanted to do. I could only afford to study for a year as my father disapproved. When I was at Bournemouth Art College I was living in Ringwood – in a turreted flat in Avon Castle. At the end of my year's course I worked for an estate agent called Charles Girard in Ringwood."

It was only after Nicola was married with children that her career as an artist took off. "One of my first commissions was to paint the president's prize at the Melpash Show."

Nicola was brought up and has lived in West Dorset most of her life. Nicola's studio is open by appointment. [www.nicolaleader.co.uk](http://www.nicolaleader.co.uk)



'Cock Pheasants'  
by Nicola Leader.



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