

Deirdre Borlase, born 1925 (died 2018). She once told about the day she became an artist. “I was meant to be studying scripture, but I was drawing promenaders enjoying the sea and children playing on the beach,” she said. “Our teacher grabbed my sketchbook and threw it on the fire. She thought she had power over me but I knew I had power over her!”

Born to Stuart and Violet Borlase in Dulwich, south London, she grew up by the sea in Margate, Kent. Her father was a plumber and the family rented out rooms in their house to holidaymakers to supplement their income.

Driven by her own sense of self-will and some encouragement from other teachers, she went to Margate School of Art. In 1940, after her house was billeted with soldiers returning from Dunkirk, she enrolled at Bromley School of Art.

In 1943 she won a scholarship to the Royal College of Art to study graphics, but Deirdre wanted to be a painter. She fought a battle with some of the staff who did not want a working-class girl in the painting class – painting was a serious business for men.

In the late 1940s she taught at Kingston School of Art and later studied printmaking at Morley College in London. She became a prolific and innovative etcher. Her work has a strong vein of English lyricism inspired in part by her hero, the artist Samuel Palmer – but it is also a powerful document of its time, depicting London and domesticity among the landscapes and still lifes.

In the postwar period she regularly exhibited at the Royal Academy in the summer exhibition but she decided to sign her work D Borlase rather than Deirdre Borlase in order to disguise her gender.

Although she thought the RA was an “old boys’ club” she enjoyed the parties and sold her paintings. Her appearance in the summer exhibition was the anchor to a career that saw her showing and selling in galleries up and down the country.

In 1981, she moved from London to Carperby in North Yorkshire and held exhibitions regularly at the Zillah Bell gallery in Thirsk.