

He lived with pigs to paint their sty



Harry Barr

HARRY BARR is quick to emphasise one thing about his 80 paintings which are on show from today at the Fermoy Art Gallery, King's Lynn. They are water-colours and not colour-drawings.

He is right. Water colours, a distinctly English medium, are so often used today "just to give it a little colour." They are used in the same way as a child who colours ready-drawn figures with paint.

Mr. Barr really enjoys water colour painting. He clearly likes the lightness and spontaneous flow of his material.

The 80 water colours on show cover almost entirely the quarter of a century he has been using the medium. There are many seascapes and landscapes, pictures of market scenes and fishing port life. Many of the subjects are local. There is a painting of the Lynn Tuesday Market Place, three of Wisbech Saturday Market, two of Wells harbour, and a series on the land reclamation scheme at Wolferton, three of which are on loan from the Crown Estate Commissioners.

RAINSPOTS

Two paintings of a pig sty illustrate his approach. When he painted the sty series he lived with the pigs, smelt like them and learnt to distinguish all their individual sounds and smells. "You must be familiar with your subject," he says.

He always works outdoors, in fog, rain and snow. Often the weather has made as many marks on his pictures as his brush. Sometimes rainspots can be distinguished.

All his paintings are representational, although in some, perhaps the

best, there is an air of fantasy. A vague mist swirls about the landscape. The more recent pictures have an incredible texture so unlike the usual flat surface of water colours.

Mr. Barr, who is 70, says he tries to make his pictures have weight and volume, to make them jump alive and yet at the same time be still.

The exhibition continues till May 7th. This is his second one-man exhibition in this country and follows one in London last year, and another which opened in Moscow and is still travelling around Russia. He is the first living British artist to have an exhibition there.