

Assembly Rooms hold a brace of exhibitions

THERE are currently two exhibitions running at the Assembly Rooms in Alton — the Alton Art Society's 51st annual exhibition and the Alton Camera Club's 25th anniversary exhibition which includes a special display of photography by Sir Harry Secombe.

The Art Society's exhibition was opened on Monday by Mr. James Hockey, former principal of the Farnham College of Art. The exhibition closes tomorrow (Saturday) when — an innovation this year — votes will be counted for the new award for the exhibit of the year.

Very democratically, each visitor who purchases a catalogue of the exhibition receives a voting slip and the entry chosen each year will receive a new trophy designed and modelled by the well-known Medstead sculptor, R. Briton Riviere.

Mr. Riviere, who is blind, donated the sculpture — an impression of an artist painting, cast in resin bronze — to society vice-president Sir Hugh Smiley on Monday who received it on their behalf in the absence of Lady Charlotte Bonham Carter, who was unable to be present.

FLATTERED

He said he had been very flattered to be asked to do the sculpture and had enjoyed it. The base had been donated by his grandson, Giles Garnham, who is an apprentice to Edward Barnsley, cabinet maker at Froxfield.

"I have had great pleasure from this and I hope those who win it in the future will also get pleasure from it."

Accepting the sculpture on behalf of the society, Sir Hugh said it would add an entirely new dimension to the exhibition.



Mr. James Hockey (left), former principal of the Farnham College of Art, looks at exhibits in the children's section with Alton Art Society chairman, Mr. Pat Edwards, after performing the opening on Monday.

The chairman, Mr. Pat Edwards, then introduced Mr. Hockey, who observed that he had had the privilege to open the exhibition once before — a long time ago. "I am very heartened by seeing what goes on in these local art societies."

Demurring to select any individual works, Mr. Hockey said: "There is obviously a lively and earnest effort going on in a fairly extensive way."

He was keen to say something about the importance and value of having such groups of people with a common interest and gave much expert advice, including "It is awfully important that we should be able to recognise and tell ourselves what it is we are setting out to do."

With over 50 years of teaching experience behind him, Mr. Hockey said how, over and over again, he found people "plunging in" without quite knowing what they set out to do.

TALENT

In this area, they were lucky to have quite a wealth of talent from very distinguished people.

Mr. Hockey was interested that people exhibiting were experimenting with various media, including oil, water colour and pastel "and to everyone I would say — do recognise your idea and then see whether what you have chosen to express it in is suitable and marries well with the idea."

Speaking again of the value of having such a group of people who were interested in the exchange of ideas, Mr. Hockey warned that such ideas should not be just jargon and studio chit-chat. He spoke of an element of sincerity and search for truth.

Mr. Hockey observed that he

was "wondering" about the idea of people voting for what they liked, and said it was not so much a matter of "what you like" but having standards whereby one could measure things.

INSPIRING

He concluded by speaking of the "very inspiring little exhibition".

Those present could then wander around the exhibition which included a variety of subjects, among them several snow scenes obviously inspired by last winter in oils and acrylics and in watercolours, pastels, enamels, gouache, screen prints, etc. There were items of pottery and sculpture, etc.

Behind the reception table were some examples of the work of the late Mrs. Jocelyn Oliphant of Selborne, a member for over 20 years who died a few months ago.

On the stage, were exhibits by children and there will be a

prize-giving tomorrow (Saturday) evening when winners in the four different sections from eight and under to 15 to 17 will receive awards.

FLOWERS

The Alton and District Flower Arrangement Society were making the flowers arrangements.

The Camera Club's exhibition in a room nearby features some work of Sir Harry Secombe who started taking photographs at the age of 14 using a Box Brownie camera and doing daylight developing. In May this year he was elected to the Council of the Royal Photographic Society.

There was also a retrospective exhibition of the 25 years of Alton Camera Club which showed the changes in style and emphasis. There were special sections for beginners prints, colour prints, colour slides, monochrome and the members' exhibition prints.