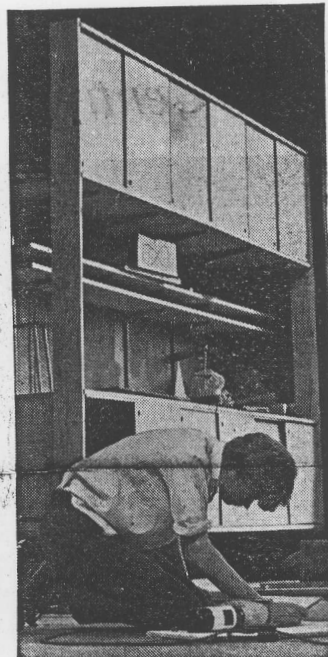
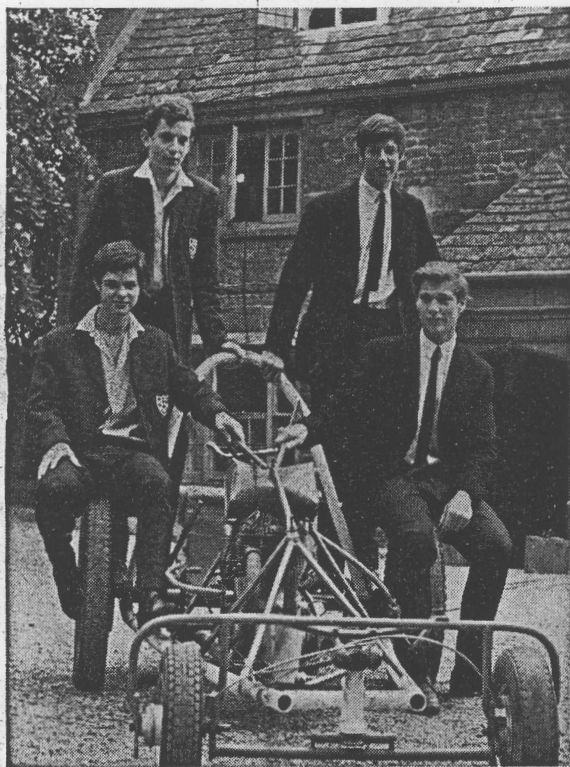




In the sculpture room.



Finishing off some built-in furniture.



Some of the boys with a "dragster" they built.

The Thring Centre

Design and technology at Uppingham

By Robert Finch

Until a few months ago The Manor House at Uppingham was an attractive Jacobean house, a long, low, two-storey building of ironstone with wind-break chimneys and a stone slated roof. The appearance of the front is exactly the same today, but through the porch and four-centred doorway the scene is one of total transformation into the twentieth century, for it is now the design and technology centre of Uppingham School.

It is a place where any kind of constructive activity can be pursued. Photographers and film-makers work alongside model-makers and potters, in rooms all over the great rambling house are magazines, sculpture, boats, television sets, play scenery and pieces of furniture, some complete—many just started. Some large rooms, added in the nineteenth century, have been opened up into a great studio in which stands a full scale mock-up of a study bedroom. And absolutely everywhere there are boys. They come streaming in after school, between periods, in the evenings, to glue, saw, chip, mould and paint for as long as they can.

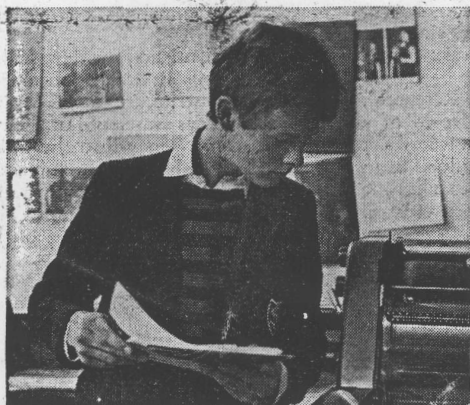
The boys are doing a great deal of the conversion of the house themselves and their enthusiasm for knocking down walls is occasionally rewarded by the discovery of an original window or door. A fourteen-year-old has no qualms about picking up a saw and making a piece of furniture; in the warden's

flat the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom (complete with contemporary four-poster) have all been constructed and fitted by novices. The carpentry of the knock-down chairs is not perfect but the designs are sound and extremely satisfying.

The man who produces the designs and who occupies the warden's flat is Christopher Richardson, who taught English and art for a while before going to the Royal College of Art "to get proper qualifications". He believes in teaching design at the earliest possible age, and his method is a mixture of enthusiasm and personal challenge.

Chalking plans and designs on walls and doors, he points to the saw and the wood and says "Go on—make it." If the boy says he does not think he can do it, he will reply "You'll never know till you try, will you?" Also attached to the centre are a physicist, a sculptress, and an artist. Like Mr. Richardson they guide and encourage rather than offer formal instruction; leaving the boys to find the relevant books, magazines and information filed in the technical library. No barriers are recognized between the various activities, a boy belongs to the centre rather than to any particular club or society within it.

Edward Thring, headmaster of Uppingham School 100 years ago, believed that every boy should be educated according to his needs and not according to some arbitrarily defined timetable. Now, in a 350-year-old house, his ideas are being put into practice.



At work on the school's illustrated magazine news sheet, printed at the centre, and, right, filming various activities. Work from the centre will be shown at "Technique and Vision", an exhibition to be held at Nottingham University Art Gallery from November 24 to December 16.

