

Wargrave Local History Society

From the archives

The topic in this item “from the archive” is from over 70 years ago, and features a special piece of equipment made by pupils at the Piggott School. Under the guidance of the woodwork and metalwork teacher, Maurice Willis, a weather station, officially recognised by the Meteorological Office, had already been created at the school. It had generated a lot of interest, not only at the school and the local area, but was featured on the fledgling BBC Television and Pathé Newsreel.

The new project was to build a telescope, and the photographs in the Society archive were Maurice Willis's record of the work done. The one on the right is dated 23rd February 1951, and shows 4 of the boys involved in the work - all aged 13 at the time. From left to right they are John Hiles, Peter Brazier, Ted Hallett and John Luker.

The work involved was not just the metalwork to fabricate the structure the boys are seen assembling on the workbench. The telescope used large convex glass mirrors, and these were specially made in the school workshops. In the picture (*below*) Ted Hallett is seen polishing one of them so form the highly accurate curved surface needed for the telescope to produce a good image.



The completed telescope was used to look at not only terrestrial objects, but also those out into space. Just how good the images it produced were can be judged by the photograph (*right*) of the surface of the moon that was taken using the telescope.

After the telescope was dismantled, the specially ground mirrors were kept, and survived into the 1980s, but, sadly, do not seem to still exist at the school.

