

# Captains on the Bridge

The eight men who have commanded the school through its first century...

## Edward J V Brown 1920-23

Teddy Brown (1869-1960) was seconded from the Teacher Training Centre to open the new 'Jordanhill Demonstration School' on 15th November 1920 and an abiding legacy was his choice of what have ever since been our school colours – green, yellow and (of course) brown. He began with a small roll – just 108 pupils; a skeleton crew (only five teachers) and no Secondary department. He was also employed as 'Master of Method' in teacher training and, as the school had been completed and opened before the new college, he had to share the building with his boss. That can never be ideal and, in September 1923, Brown sensibly relinquished the reins.

Teddy Brown was fondly remembered by many pupils, and enjoyed so long a retirement he outlived two of his successors.

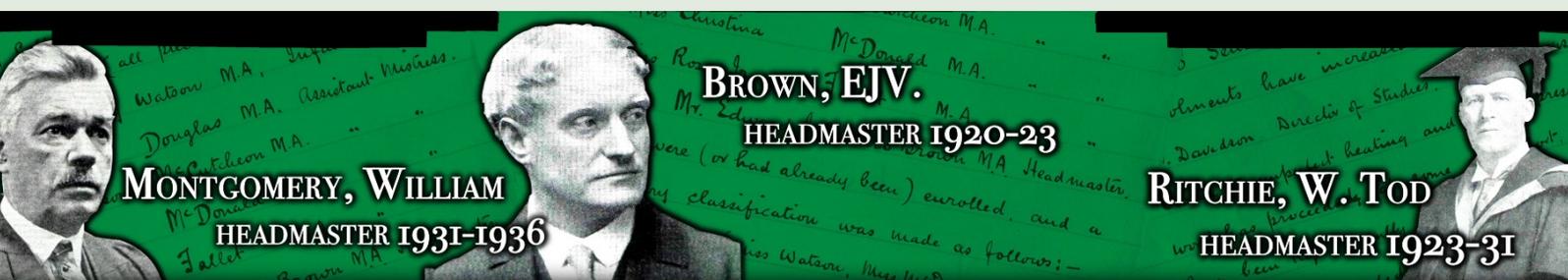
## William Tod Ritchie 1923 - 31

W Tod Ritchie (1881-1955), previously Rector of Alloa Academy, joined us in September 1923 and would command for eight years. He invented most of our ancient traditions – Sports Day, Prize Giving, 'honours,' and – from 1925 – an annual school magazine. He also introduced classroom use of the 'wireless' and established a 'School Fund,' which has endured in one form or another ever since – and, from June 1925, a much snappier name, Jordanhill College School. But his successors always regretted his failure to secure our own playing-pitches at a time when local fields were going cheap.

An honourable man, Ritchie was shabbily treated by the College Board of Governors, who denied him resources and broke a clear promise about his own salary. He quit in June 1931 for the headship of North Kelvinside Secondary School, but is best remembered in Glasgow for his final, 13-year command of Hutchesons' Grammar.

## William Montgomerie 1931 - 36

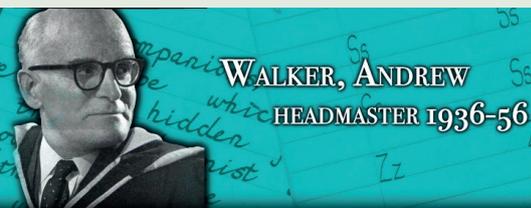
We know embarrassingly little about this lugubrious mountain of a man, a respected Classics master who left the leadership of Campbellfield School for Jordanhill promotion. Surviving pupils recall a quiet Christian gentleman who conducted Morning Assembly with an affecting reverence. He also ordered the school's first woodwork room. He is otherwise best remembered as our only Head to die in office – suddenly, in February 1936.



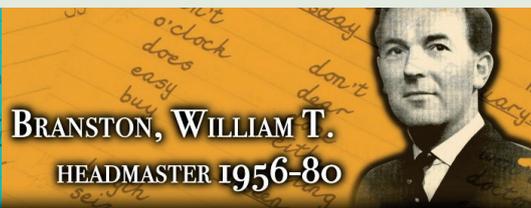
**BROWN, EJV.**  
HEADMASTER 1920-23

**MONTGOMERY, WILLIAM**  
HEADMASTER 1931-1936

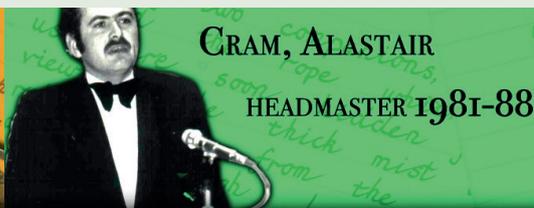
**RITCHIE, W. TOD**  
HEADMASTER 1923-31



**WALKER, ANDREW**  
HEADMASTER 1936-56



**BRANSTON, WILLIAM T.**  
HEADMASTER 1956-80



**CRAM, ALASTAIR**  
HEADMASTER 1981-88

## Andrew Walker 1936 - 56

Andrew Walker (1893-1974) was the human dynamo who had previously taught at Jordanhill – he was our first Secondary teacher – from 1921 to 1932, and who could (and did) take classes in every subject save French. As Headmaster, he brought in a house-system, the abiding school motto, ‘Ad Summa Nitor’ (from 1945) and our quartered badge. He demanded the highest standards – and usually got them; once, he once all but tore the school apart in successful search for the youngster who had dared to drop a tram ticket in the corridor.

But Walker also had to endure the Second World War, 1940 requisitioning of the school building and the death of many former pupils in the fight against Nazi Germany, all of whom he had known. Small wonder we have not a single photograph of him smiling.

A surprising number of pupils from his time subsequently returned as Jordanhill teachers, including Eleanor McArthur, Margaret Goodwin and Michael Paterson – and most agree that it was under him the school finally flowered in full glory.

Andrew Walker loved the school to bits, and an important retrospective article from his pen for the 1971 magazine was our final gift from the man so many still revere as ‘The Boss.’

## Alastair B Cram 1981 - 88

Alastair Cram (1945-2017) was our youngest ever Head Teacher (he disliked the handle of ‘headmaster,’ and refused to use it) and, a bristling figure with a brushy moustache, was swiftly nicknamed ‘Basil.’ But he hurled himself into Jordanhill life, made his home on Woodend Drive, was held in the highest regard and till the very end by most of his staff, and was central to the battle to save the school from privatisation at the hands of Mrs Thatcher’s ministers.

Cram made early and, some felt, overdue reforms. He introduced Business Studies and formal Social Education, abolished corporal punishment, and ended the deplorable academic streaming for Second Year. He added proper Science classes to the Primary curriculum, created pupil councils and left his own abiding physical legacy – the

## William Thomson Branston 1956 - 80

W T Branston (1917-1984) became, on his appointment in November 1956 at the height of the Suez Crisis, the youngest headmaster in Scotland. Blessed with a rich resonant voice, screen-idol good looks and the poise and bearing of the young Royal Navy officer he had been, he remains our longest serving leader and no other has had to contend with so much tumultuous change, both socially and educationally.

Branston had to weather, from 1969 to 1970, the biggest threat the school has ever faced – the Labour government of the day was determined to close it – and, from the early Seventies, tighter and tighter purse-strings from on high. But, a shrewd judge of people, he generally recruited well and, in close liaison with Sir Henry Wood at the College, he left an abiding physical legacy: the gym, refectory, Technical and Science blocks were all erected in the midSixties and at his decree. Forced from 1970 quickly to reinvent Jordanhill College School as a non-selective area comprehensive, he adapted graciously and, too, drew up what remains our catchment area.

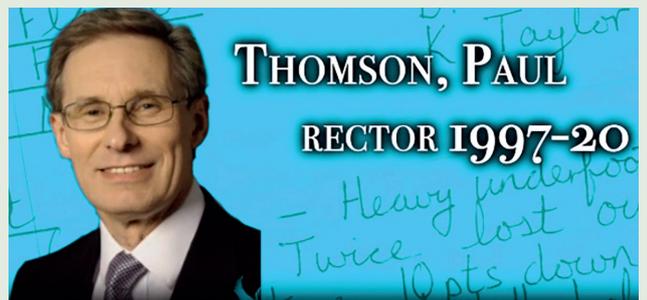
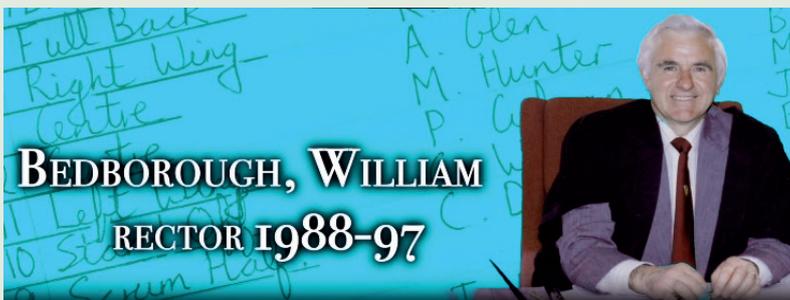
Suave, musical, beautifully dressed and bowler-hatted, Branston also held important roles in everything from Glasgow University through the Kirk to the YMCA. But Bill Branston was much more liberal than he appeared or a later generation might think: in 1979, and with his tacit approval, the school magazine carried an anonymous poem slamming what we would now call homophobia. For the Scotland of that era, this was sensational.

Universally respected, Mr Branston stood down in December 1980. He died suddenly in December 1984, still only sixty-six

special tie, with the school badge, worn by S5 and S6 students. Dafter changes – S5 prefects; abolition of ‘Houses’ – were binned by his successor.

Crisis as to the school’s future began to rumble from June 1985 and raged in full ferocity from September 1986. Alastair Cram threw himself into the struggle heart and soul and in April 1988, as Jordanhill School simpliciter, we were reborn in our current incarnation.

But all was not as it should have been. Undone by alcoholism and humiliated by a serious drink-driving conviction, Cram was reluctantly dismissed – after repeated warnings – in November 1988 by the Board of Managers and, sadly, never successfully re-established himself in teaching.



## William F Bedborough

1989 - 97

Bill Bedborough (b. 1942) inherited a demoralised, scruffy, badly shaken institution with serious problems. With an energy and focus that put school veterans in mind of Andrew Walker, and after many discouragements in his first year at the helm, after eight years our first Rector would bequeath a newly confident academy fit for the pending new millennium.

In one deft Prizegiving speech he drew a firm line under recent melodrama, and moved on. Over two years the original, crumbling school building was massively renovated. Pupil indiscipline had by 1989 become serious: the new Bedborough broom dealt decisively with louts, vandals and litterbugs - but he also introduced the green tie exclusive to pupils of outstanding achievement.

In 1995 he made the most of the school's 75th anniversary, with assorted festivals and celebrations. Jordanhill moved rapidly into a new, digital age: Drama and Computing were introduced. A work-experience programme began; Guidance systems were hugely improved and a 1994 HMI report was glowing.

Throughout a terrifyingly active retirement, Bill Bedborough has remained a constant, kindly friend of Jordanhill School.

### School Archives

Over the last few months we have received a number of donations to our school archive collection from the families of Former Pupils. We would be delighted to hear from Former Pupils and their families if they have photos, memorabilia, old uniform etc they would like to donate or lend for scanning.

If you would like to enquire about donating items to our school Archive please contact our School Librarian Joanna Donaldson [jo\\_donaldson@jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk](mailto:jo_donaldson@jordanhill.glasgow.sch.uk)

## Paul W Thomson

1997 - 2020

Dr Thomson (b. 1957) took power on the same day as Tony Blair but has lasted rather longer: thankfully, his moustache has not. South of forty then, he has since given almost quarter of a century to our service, and behind a seeming shyness lies formidable intellect, a love of children and a keen eye for the balance-sheet.

The Thomson era has been marked by three things. He is a master, and at every level, of communication - staff liaison, engagement with parents, the community, the Scottish Government and so on - and an intense listener. Small wonder, then, that on many fronts, and especially in STEM subjects and pastoral care, the school is widely regarded as sector-leading, has won innumerable awards and was hailed as outstanding in the HMI assessment.

Oh, and he fixed capacity. With the completion in 2008 of the New Classroom Block, extension of the Refectory and subsequent renovation of the Science building, Thomson delivered us from huts. Flood-lit all-weather pitches and a multi-user games area are now amenities prized by the whole community and in recent years the main building has been splendidly redecorated and with much subtle renovation, notably of the school's main hall and lobby.

It turned out, too, that behind the calculating eyes of a cool physicist lay keen aesthetic judgement and an eye for space, light, fabric and detail - even in the design of Jordanhill sports-kit and the matching, school-branded fleeces proudly sported by the janitors.

Dr Thomson should have crowned his Jordanhill course with the full-fat victory laps of this centennial year. Providence decreed otherwise and he has met the coronavirus challenges unflappably and without complaint. In a part-time capacity, this self-effacing man has for some months worked on until his announced successor (and sometime Jordanhill colleague) John Anderson takes up post.