

THANKS A MILLION: Lord Laidlaw has already given money to Merchiston Castle to help build a new boarding house

Scots Lord hands over £1m to private school in Capital

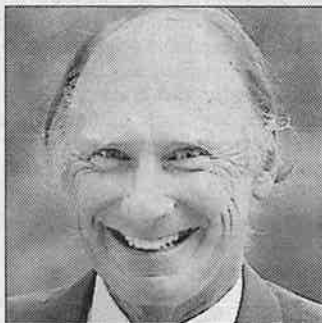
Lord Laidlaw gives scholarship gift to Merchiston Castle

■ GARETH ROSE
Education Reporter

SCOTLAND'S second richest man is offering £1 million worth of scholarships to help talented youngsters, from poorer backgrounds, attend a private school.

Conservative Party donor Lord Laidlaw of Rothiemay – who has been questioned in the cash for peerages inquiry – will offer money to pupils unable to pay the fees at Merchiston Castle School, where he was once a pupil.

The boys boarding school, which was founded in 1833 by Sir Charles Chalmers, is keen to attract children from different



CASH GIFT: Irvine Laidlaw

backgrounds and already supports some of its less well off pupils to varying degrees.

The scholarship will be available to boys aged 13 and over, who have been marked out for their talent or potential either academically, in music, drama, technology, art or leadership.

It will fund them for up to five

years, covering up to 100 per cent of their fees. Lord Laidlaw, who is based in Monaco, was questioned in the cash for peerages inquiry after it emerged he failed to give up his status as a tax exile.

He has also promised to give away most of his fortune in the coming months through his charitable foundation

He has already donated a further £1 million towards the building of the Merchiston Castle's new sixth form boarding house, which will accommodate 126 boys in en suite bedrooms, when it opens in September 2008.

Andrew Hunter, headmaster at Merchiston Castle, said: "I am delighted to see this partnership between a leading philanthropist and Merchristonian with the present Merchriston."

Lord Laidlaw, 62, the son of a Banffshire woollen mill-owner's son, attended Merchiston from

1956 to 1960, and was awarded the economics prize in the sixth form.

He went on to Leeds University, gaining a BA in Economics in 1963, followed by an MBA from Columbia University, USA, in 1965, and became the founder of the Institute for International Research, one of the world's largest conference and training specialists.

He has said: "Education cannot be ignored.

"We must do more for our young people.

"Children are our future, and yet there is so much wasted talent out there, and we cannot afford to waste talent."

Lord Laidlaw is chairman of the Laidlaw Youth Project, a mentoring scheme for disadvantaged youngsters which he helps to fund.

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