

= The Land of Lost Content =

The Land of Lost Content : the Biography of Anthony Chenevix Trench is a biographical book about the life of British headmaster Anthony Chenevix Trench , written by Mark Peel . Chenevix Trench had been a widely acclaimed teacher at Shrewsbury School , and subsequently headmaster at Bradfield College , Eton College and Fettes College , but was later criticised for his approach to corporal punishment . Published by Pentland Press in 1996 , the book received mixed reviews , with questions over its neutrality and writing style , but plaudits for its insights into British culture and education .

= = Background = =

Chenevix Trench was known for his substantial tenures as headmaster of Bradfield College , Eton College and Fettes College ; he had also taught at Shrewsbury School . He died in 1979 . In 1994 , a book by Tim Card , a former Vice Provost of Eton , revealed for the first time that Chenevix Trench had not left his position as headmaster of Eton of his own accord . There followed some newspaper articles critical of Chenevix Trench 's use of corporal punishment , and numerous letters to the editor in response , most of which were positive about Chenevix Trench 's legacy . Peel , a teacher at Fettes College at the time , published The Land of Lost Content two years later .

= = Content = =

The book is divided into seven chapters , respectively covering Chenevix Trench 's ancestry and early childhood , his education at Shrewsbury School and Christ Church , Oxford , his military service in the Malayan Campaign during the Second World War , and his successive spells of teaching at Shrewsbury , Bradfield , Eton and Fettes . A five page postscript entitled merely " Tony Chenevix Trench " draws conclusions . There is also a five page introduction , and a three page foreword by Sir William Gladstone . The Land of Lost Content is the title of a poem from A.E. Housman 's 1896 cycle A Shropshire Lad , which Chenevix Trench translated into Latin while a prisoner of the Japanese during the Second World War .

In Peel 's view , Bradfield , Eton and Fettes all saw Chenevix Trench become headmaster at " critical points in their history " , and he was " a headmaster whose personality met many of their priorities , breathing fresh life into creaking limbs " . The book argues that , despite Chenevix Trench 's shortcomings being " too readily obvious " , " overshadowing the flaws stands his passionate concern for the individual , a vital quality for any leader to possess " .

The book ends with a quotation from Chenevix Trench about the importance of education :

What is a boy ? He is a person who is going to carry on what you have started , to sit where you are sitting and , when you are gone , attend to those things you think are so important . You can adopt all the policies you please , but how they will be carried on depends on him . Even if you make leagues and treaties , he will have to manage them . He will assume control of your cities and nations . He is going to move on and take over your prisons , churches , schools , universities and corporations .

All your work is going to be judged by him . Your reputation and the future are in his hands . All your work is for him , and the fate of nations and humanity is also in his hands .

So it might be well to pay him some attention now .

= = Reception = =

The book received a mixed reception from critics . Writing in the Daily Telegraph , Ludovic Kennedy said that the book describes Chenevix Trench 's career with considerable " affection " , while not shying away from revealing " many uncomfortable home truths " . Kennedy has a few " quibbles " with the book , particularly its over use of clichés , but concludes that Chenevix Trench

, who he said " never bore a grudge " , would have approved despite the flaws . Kennedy also titles his review with the words of Chenevix @-@ Trench , who joked of his own tenure at Eton ? " endearingly " , according to Kennedy ? " In some ways I 'm too small a man in too big a job . "

Another positive voice was Lorn Macintyre , writing in the Herald , who said that the book gives " an honest insight into the public school system with all its imperfections " . He further comments that although Peel reveals some things that are " disturbing " , he also shows Chenevix @-@ Trench 's " dedication to high academic standards , to the all @-@ round development of a young person despite his use of the rod " .

Simon Heffer , writing in the Daily Mail , said that Peel " does not write with sufficient detachment " or rigorously enough , but that the book will be of great interest to those who want to know " what is really wrong with the British Establishment " ? Heffer made it clear that he felt Chenevix @-@ Trench should never have been Headmaster of Eton in the first place , and that other people 's appointments in the " British Establishment " were equally flawed . Paul Foot wrote a personal recollection for the Diary section of the London Review of Books , reprinted in the Guardian , in which he described the book as " a wretched hagiography , full of clichés and bad jokes " , and objected to its portrayal of Chenevix @-@ Trench as " a heroic figure " .