

*To, Barrie Walker, who could have, should have and would have written this  
book and my ever-supportive  
wife, Dolores, who has 'lived' with Leonard Lord for 25 years.*

## FOREWORD

As someone not directly involved in the motor industry, but from a family that had extensive interests in the component manufacturing side, I was flattered to be invited to write a foreword to this book. My principal qualification has to be that I am Leonard Lord's grandson but over and above that relationship, someone who remembers him with both enormous affection and respect.

In recent years the way my grandfather has been maligned by, and the subject of much misinformation from not only a number of motoring journalists, but also so-called 'historians' and commentators in the wider media, has become increasingly unacceptable.

I am delighted, therefore, that this book, although it takes a 'warts and all' stance, will go a long way towards correcting the record and firmly establishing the breadth of Leonard Lord's achievement and its huge significance on the national and industrial scene.

In saying this I have to emphasize that this is not a 'car book' in the accepted sense. The setting is, of course, that world, yet students of sociology will find a tremendous amount of interest as will anyone concerned with military history and the national and political scene from the 1920s until the early 60s.

The writer suggests that Leonard Lord was the greatest British industrialist of the latter half of the 20th century. Whether or not that is true it is my hope that by the closing pages of this book the reader will be able to make an accurate, but above all, fair assessment of the man's contribution to the nation.

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Berkshire, UK  
2010

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*This is a unique book. That is not the conceit it may seem. The uniqueness is in the number of people, from industry and beyond, who, given the opportunity, have wanted to add their brush strokes to a realistic portrait of the man most of them recognize only as the father of the British Motor Corporation.*

*Leonard Lord was immensely more than that. Yet he remains an unsung hero. One of, if not the greatest exponents of British industry when the nation's manufacturing sector was second only in significance to that of America.*

*In recent decades Lord, largely as a consequence of his no longer being alive, and that when he was, his life was closed and private, has become an all-too-easy scapegoat for the ills and ultimate demise of the United Kingdom's motor industry.*

*His reticence makes the task of the biographer difficult. In some cases the available sources are limited. Others may now wish to expand or disagree with my assessment. I welcome the discussion. Meanwhile I give you the real Leonard Lord.*

## INTRODUCTION

In her biography of Jacky Fisher, an admiral as great as Nelson, some say greater, Jan Morris describes how she came to write an account of the great sailor's life. "*Although he died six years before I was born he has been one of my life's companions*", she says. Casual sight of a photograph in the late 1940s was her first acquaintance. The chance acquisition of a set of his memoirs followed. Endless correspondence with former shipmates, relatives and acquaintances, with women who adored him and men who detested him, ensued. The cuttings, files and books accumulated. "*I cherished the project in my heart for the better part of a lifetime,*" says Morris.

Her book, *Fisher's Face* (Random House), was published in 1995. The story of a man who was a great Englishman, a disgrace to his uniform, a manipulator, a hobgoblin, a damned Socialist, a crook, a paragon of kindness, a *parvenu*, a cad, a genius, a fraud, a delight. I came to Len Lord in a similar way to Jan Morris coming to Admiral Fisher.

Somewhere in my late teens or early 20s I fell upon the quote: "*We're not in business to make bloody motor cars; we're in business to make money*". It was attributed to a man whose name I had only seen in ancient, back numbers of the *Austin Magazine*, and then only vaguely noted – Leonard Lord.

To this day I could not tell you if '*we're not in business to make motor cars but to make money*' is a Lord original. Certainly, something similar was being quoted to recruits at Rolls-Royce in Derby as late as the 1960s.

*'Why is Rolls-Royce in business?'*

*'To make the world's best aeroplane engines, sir'.*

*'Wrong'.*

*"To develop the most advanced aero engine technology, sir'.*

*'Wrong...to make money!'*

Although I don't know whether the utterance is unadulterated 'Lord' it stuck with me, colouring my very perception of business and of life itself. Other statements clung, snowball-like, to this first flake: '*Make proper cars and you don't need salesmen*'; '*If the door's not open, kick it open*'; and the rather less inspiring, '*I'm going to take Cowley apart brick by bloody brick*' and '*what are those buggers down on the farm (Morris - my insertion) doing*'.

Here was a man, who, if nothing else, was colourful. Someone eminently quotable in an industry where, if you set aside Royce's, '*whatever is rightly done, however humble, is noble*', and Ford's, '*you can have any colour as long as it's black*', seemed singularly devoid of aphorisms. I became a motoring correspondent and my interest in Lord grew - the secondary school boy who rose to be a captain of industry and had led a company I had revered since childhood – 'the Austin'. Sparse facts were beginning to attach themselves to those first anecdotal flakes.

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I discovered the Morris Motors years, realized I had found the man who gave us the Morris Eight then quarrelled with William Morris, departed and was to say he would take the business apart brick by brick. I grew to appreciate his impact on immediately pre-War Austins and became familiar with the term 'Lord look'. I was conscious of his presence at Longbridge during the dark days of WWII, suspected much, but could prove very little.

He grew in stature as I came to appreciate his role in the merciless battle for dollars in the late '40s.

I reeled at the brazen decisiveness of a man who set the Mini on course to become one of the best known and best loved cars the world has ever known. Yet I was frustrated there was apparently no biography of this hero. Moreover, my peers in motoring journalism seemed to be obsessed with two utterly unimportant aspects of his life. That he swore a lot and smoked a lot. This struck me as a remarkable indictment of those who purport to be serious commentators on the motor industry and indeed the economic and industrial history of the Western world.

Admittedly, there was plenty in print, much of it banal, whole *tranches* of it anecdotal and a great deal highly questionable. Just as Jan Morris cherished the desire to tell the story of Fisher, like any journalist worth their salary, I harboured a wish to correct the injustices heaped upon Lord.

It is scandalous that history should remember a man who achieved so much, not only in the motor industry but on the industrial scene as a whole, primarily as a cigarette-puffing foul-mouth. It is easily arguable that Lord was the most important British industrialist of the latter half of the 20th century and that without his influence the end of the nation's car making would have come 40 years earlier than it did. Yet these two points seem to have become incidental to the trivia.

All that said, I am more fortunate, for obvious reasons, than Jan Morris. I have no romantic illusions about Leonard Lord! Some of what he did in the late 1940s and in the '50s, towards the end of his career, did indeed contribute to the collapse of the British motor industry. Even so, this has to be viewed in context, with the benefit of hindsight, and acknowledging that in many instances a person's greatest strengths are also their weaknesses.

Writing in *The Automobile* magazine in December 2007, motoring journalist, Jonathan Wood, suggests that Miles Thomas, whose path crossed that of Lord on more than one occasion, was: '*the best leader the British motor industry never had*'. The point is, of course, hypothetical and purely academic. Miles Thomas *wasn't* the leader of the British motor industry; Leonard Lord was. And how!

Yet this is a story of, to broadly quote something yet to come and that, at this stage, will mean little to the reader - '*relentless energy, arrogance, a domineering nature, furious temper, ruthlessness, impatience and a single-minded devotion to business*'. It is also a story of strained parenting, a traumatic childhood and in various arenas, sex and sexual ambivalence. That is the story of one section of the British motor industry and, in a way, of its destruction.

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It is, also, of course, a story of a cancerous, debilitating, industrial relations infrastructure and of thwarted vision, of courage and determination.

We must take all that on board, while recognizing that for far too long it has been a case of 'anything goes' for many of those who have written or spoken about Lord. A piece of misinformation here an irrelevant or misleading anecdote there. That said, to write about the man with any degree of authority is difficult. Most of the people who worked alongside him in positions of authority are dead and, for whatever reason, he covered his tracks extremely well. Indeed, to chart this life may be more difficult than examining that of a Pepys, one of the Tudors, or any number of characters that have been dead for hundreds of years; rather than less than 50.

Such is the challenge we now face.

## CHAPTER ONE - HOPE BUT NO ANCHOR

She was strikingly beautiful; stark naked and rode through the streets bareback.

The legend of Lady Godiva is one of two things most people know about the city of Coventry in the English Midlands. The other is that it was once an epicentre of the nation's motor industry; home to such universally acclaimed makes as Daimler, Jaguar, Alvis and Riley.

It would be convenient if we could cite as another well-known fact that the conurbation was the birthplace of Leonard Percy Lord. The reality though is different. The story of Lord's upbringing there is fragmented, complex and difficult to assess. Born in Coventry he certainly was, to Emma (*née* Swain) and William Lord, on November 15, 1896. Emma was four years Lord's senior and Leonard was the younger of two children. What has been previously documented is Mr Lord was superintendent of Coventry's public baths – just one, in reality.

The history of this facility dates back to 1742 when a small cold water wash house was established by private enterprise. By 1820 it had been expanded into a much bigger undertaking in Smithfield Street. However, the type of baths William Lord would have known were corporation run and first appeared in Hales Street in 1852. Such was the craving for cleanliness, and indeed the public health need, of the citizens of Coventry, that 2,000 of them passed through the waters on opening day.

Greater capacity came in 1891, but the work of those architectural doyens of the nation's public baths and wash houses, Henry Spalding and Alfred Cross, was not yet for Coventry. Not the towering facades and elegant windows of their Hampstead, Marylebone or Camberwell designs. The facility William Lord oversaw had been intended as a Wesleyan chapel but converted by Francis James, an entrepreneur from Wolverhampton, who had previously provided baths for Halifax and Nottingham.

The 22 foot frontage was on the west side of Priory Street and the building extended back for about three times that distance. Back-up water tanks were housed in the roof, part of the first floor was devoted to a flat where the Lords would have lived and Leonard was born, while the fire-proofed basement housed the boiler and laundry equipment. The first class bathers had changing rooms on the ground floor while their less affluent counterparts went upstairs to what had been designed as the upper gallery of the church, supported on ornamental iron pillars.

The hot rooms themselves were communal, offering three temperature ranges: from 130-140° Fahrenheit, through 160-190°, to 200-240°. There was also a vapour bath and a very hazardous-sounding electric bath.

Mr Lord, working from eight to eight, would have collected the money in a lobby just beyond the public entrance, issued the tickets, directed the clients to the appropriate sections, ensured it was women only on Wednesday, seen that the chiropodist was on hand and, no doubt, complained to his Emma about the vagaries of the 100 cell battery for that 'electric dip'.

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Another structurally extravagant building was Wheatley Street Schools. It had been opened in 1893 and accommodated a total of 1,228 pupils; at that time, in three streams, from infants, through elementary, to senior. It was here the young Leonard received his early education, but whether or not he was ever actively aware of his father's ultra respectable, stable, lower middle class employment is not clear. By the time the boy was attending Wheatley Street, William Lord would have been hatching plans for a change of direction. When his son was old enough to start senior school, on August 22, 1906, the family address was *The Hope and Anchor* public house at 17 Whitefriars Lane, just to the north east of the city centre, near where the workhouse then stood and today the Ringway looms.

Why William Lord took the licence in preference to continuing in what we can only imagine was a regular, respected and not uncomfortable role is a mystery. It is, of course, the whim of many, when they feel a certain financial security, to run a pub and play mine host. Albeit, not usually in a city centre. Or the old adage of 'the grass being greener', with the actuality far removed from the dream, could equally well have applied. Or indeed, it could have been something quite different. An inheritance perhaps, or circumstances within the extended family or something different again. But this is supposition. And anyway, is it relevant to our story?

I think it is.

On the basis that early experience affects all our lives as does the quality, or otherwise, of our parenting. I believe this period impacted on Lord, not least because *The Hope and Anchor* venture was, as we shall see, not an unqualified success. This would not have been the romanticized inn of Noyes's '*Highwayman*', more that of George Moore's *Esther Waters*. The living quarters were normally upstairs with split level accommodation on the ground floor, the ceilings of which would not have been much higher than a tall man's head.

Often there were three bars. The parlour, a semi-private area for special customers where spirits could be served from a mahogany wotnot; the public bar, and an area called the jug and bottle which we might liken to an off-licence and selling beer by the pitcher.

The parlour and public bars were often separated by a silk or velvet curtain and in addition to the landlord and his family it was common for a serving girl and a pot boy to have lived there amid the sawdust-spread floors.

For Leonard Lord, school now meant 'the Bablake'. There is some debate as to the exact origins of that august Coventry establishment. But a good case can be made for its roots dating from 1344 when Queen Isabella gave land in the countryside at Babbalak for the building of a church. This may have been to salve her conscience over her involvement in the gruesome murder of her husband, Edward II, whose homosexuality, somewhat understandably, did not please the French princess. In any event, it seems likely that by the mid 1360s her church of St John had assumed an educational role, possibly at the behest of the Black Prince, Isabella's grandson, and on additional land given by him.



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Such charitable acts kept the school going until 1563 when Thomas Wheatley, a former mayor of Coventry, handed it much of a bizarre windfall. According to a rather unlikely story, Wheatley had ordered some steel wedges, or maybe that should read widgets, from Spain. The couriers of the day misdelivered the consignment and he received instead a crate of silver ingots whose rightful destination proved impossible to establish. Troubled by this situation, Wheatley resolved not to profit from the mischance and spent his gain on good works. Thus the school was able to provide board, clothing and tuition, significantly as far as we are concerned, *for poor boys that wished to become apprentices*.

Although little is known about Bablake in the 17th and 18th centuries it was still holding true to these traditions in the 19th and 20th. That is undoubtedly part of the explanation as to why Lord transferred there in 1906 instead of moving into the senior stream at Wheatley Road. Bablake shrank to just one pupil in 1824, but by 1870 headmaster Henry Mander had turned it into a flourishing institution. It was against this backdrop that the scene was being set for the life and training Leonard Lord enjoyed.

William Lord died on November 26, 1911, of cirrhosis of the liver and a duodenal ulcer. He was 44, Leonard barely 15. William Lord's daughter, 22-year-old Annie, registered the death. The popular perception is that the first complaint results from alcohol abuse. Although this is broadly true, it can also emerge, after a long period, in sufferers from the blood-borne virus hepatitis C – although this form of the infection had not been identified in 1911 – and the latter can be contracted from nothing more sinister than a transfusion of infected blood. However, on the circumstantial evidence, I think we must conclude William Lord, now officially a licensed victualler, drank himself to death.

From a note on Leonard Lord's school record card dated August 1, 1909, we learn the boy's fees are to be paid in their entirety by Coventry Education Committee. This funding is then renewed every year until the end of his schooling in the summer of 1913. Thus it would seem affairs at *The Hope and Anchor* were not going well. At first the support was just one shilling per week (5p) eventually rising to 3s 6d (17.5p). Of the 322 pupils attending with Lord, 87 were financed either by scholarship or what we might term social support.

It follows that with the death of her husband and in a harsh male-dominated environment, it would have been virtually impossible for Emma to continue at *The Hope and Anchor*. So uncomfortable, perhaps, that the period has been air-brushed from family history altogether, not least by Leonard Lord. Emma and her children moved a little further north to 305 Foleshill Road. But we need to ask, did anything positive from Whitefriars Lane move with the boy? Although the value is debatable, it is possible that there his colourful turn of phrase was first implanted in those over-size ears pressed, along with that statuesque nose, to a bedroom wall or surreptitiously encroaching on a raucous adult world. We can even surmise that some of his forthrightness and sure-footedness was engendered in similar circumstances.

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The Domesday Book spells what Leonard Lord knew as Foleshill, 'Fulkeshill'. Later documentation renders it Folkshull. But all versions are a corruption of 'folk's' or 'people's hill'. In one form or another it would have been known to Lady Godiva, who we met briefly at the start of the chapter. Her husband, Earl Leofric, was lord of the manor and it is thought it was her ladyship who built the 11th century church of St Lawrence there. George Eliot lived on the southern edge of the area from 1841-49 and the weaving village of Tipton in her novel *Middlemarch* is probably Foleshill.

Until the beginning of the 18th century the hamlet was predominantly an agricultural settlement but, gradually, single hand loom weaving developed as, quite literally, a cottage industry. The opening of James Brindley's 38-mile Coventry canal, begun in 1768, and the Coventry and Nuneaton branch railway line in 1850, gave the activity a boost. At the time of the weavers' strike of 1860 6,430 of the 8,140 people in the parish and 30,000 of Coventry's total population were involved in making silk ribbon, chenille and black crepe, a coarser form, popular at the time for female funeral wear and over the long mourning periods of the age.

In part, the strike arose when workers at the Courtaulds mill in Halstead, Essex, downed shuttles in a bid to get a share of the 1000 per cent increase in profits the company had seen since 1830. But in Coventry it was more to do with preserving protectionist policies. Needless to say, when home supplies were no more, foreign ribbon flooded the market and the industry was crippled. At least 2,000 jobs were lost in Foleshill alone. Those that could, got out. Into better trades in Coventry itself, typically watchmaking; or to Birmingham, Leicester, Lancashire and sometimes North America. Many who were left went hungry.

However, it was not the end of silk weaving in the district. In 1862 William Stevens stepped in to alleviate the crisis by inventing and manufacturing the Stevengraph, a silk weave bookmark with an illustration relating to the subject of the volume in which it would be used. We might consider these the height of kitsch, but they were popular at the time and in 1882 W H Grant opened a mill, in Lockhurst Lane, to make a range of similar items. Grants were still operating in the late 1930s. John and Joseph Cash's business, with its roots as far back as the 1840s, exists to this day making some of the items on Torrington Avenue, Coventry, that made Coventry famous. Their most noteworthy product, developed around 1870, was labels for school uniforms. No doubt it was such tags Emma sewed into her son's and daughter's school clothes.

In 1904, perhaps ironically, but certainly of great importance to this story, Courtaulds arrived on the Foleshill Road and established a factory that would make them world leaders in the production of artificial fibre. One of the plant's various claims to fame was that in 1924 a 365 ft chimney, reputed to be the tallest in the land, was added. Even single hand loom weaving, the term distinguishing it from machine or factory processes, survived, to an extent, into the '20s. A 1927 issue of the *Coventry Standard* carried a short feature on an elderly couple still producing silk ribbon by this method.

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Perhaps even more important than the continuation of silk weaving was that other industries were establishing themselves in the district. Brickworks along the canal; the Arthur Herbert company, that claimed to be the largest machine tool maker in the world and could justifiably argue that access to equipment like its capstan lathes was one of the reasons the automotive industry came to Coventry in the first place, and, of course, just off Foleshill Road itself, car maker Riley.

A complexly structured operation, Riley had been producing bicycles, engines and the odd car from 1890 but vehicle production in the accepted sense did not start until 1913. That the factory was rented from a wealthy entrepreneur named Lancelot Pratt will become of some relevance later when we find this gentleman closely associated with William Morris.

In little over a century, Foleshill had changed from a sleepy agricultural hamlet to a sprawling urban community that was the most heavily industrialized in Coventry. Growing up there, Leonard Lord would have been acutely aware of the manufacturing scene and would have seen, and heard at first hand, all the ramifications including those that surrounded labour relations. However revealing that may have been, there was more poignant enlightenment - watching his mother struggling in reduced circumstances.

By the time Leonard Lord arrived at Bablake the school had moved from its ancient site in Hill Street to splendid new premises at Coundon, opened on October 20, 1890. It still occupies them. The headmaster of the day was Joseph Innis Bates; his second in command Francis Humberstone and the matron the formidable Miss Cramp. No doubt Lord was one of the boys who quipped that Miss Cramp herself had been founded in 1560.

The buildings Leonard knew were of York and Corsham stone in the Gothic style to the design of Giles, Gough and Trollope of Craven Street, The Strand, London. The budget set by the trustees was £16,000 all in, which was not an onerous sum as they owned several farms and three public houses. It would be intriguing if one was *The Hope and Anchor* but this is not the case, the hostelries in question being *The Board Tavern* in Cross Cheaping, *The City Hotel* on Broadgate and Cow Lane's *The Bablake Boy*.

The new school could accommodate around 400 boys, 40 of whom would have been boarders. As a day boy, Lord would have made his way through the main door in a tower with battlements and surmounted by a clock. He would have said his prayers and attended communal events in the great hall with its block floor, hammer beam roof and tracery windows with tinted glass.

But probably of more interest to him were the impressively equipped chemistry laboratory and indeed the metalwork workshop that had been added in 1894 at the back of the headmaster's house, and the physics lab, which came in 1896. The metalwork room featured a forge and anvil and in Lord's day was under the control of a teacher named Frank Morgan.

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The facilities just described suggest an emphasis on technical and practical training and this reflected Bablake's desire to become what was termed an Organized Science School. This was a phenomenon embodied in Liberal MP William Forster's 1870 Education Act. It sought to provide more technical and clerical staff for industry and was to a format agreed with the national Department of Science and Art. Such schools had to devote more than half their timetable to scientific subjects with the remainder spent on manual work, extra maths or art of 'a kind that would be of value to industry'. Thus it becomes even clearer why Leonard Lord was not continuing his studies at Wheatley Road but sat in the 40-strong classes at Bablake, tolerating longer days and shorter holidays than at comparable schools.

As an Organized Science School Bablake would have been a 'halfway house' between an elementary and the city's King Henry VIII Grammar School. This led to a certain amount of controversy. The first pupils came, like Lord, from the elementary system and found Bablake true to its traditions – providing '*an opportunity for families of modest means to have their sons educated to a level fitting for apprenticeship to a trade*'. Two thirds of Lord's classmates would have been the children of artisans, shopkeepers and clerks, only a tiny percentage having a parent listed as 'professional' or 'independent'. Even the Humberstone prize for character and scholarship and intended for someone proceeding to higher education, took account of the parents' financial standing.

In the main the intake was of modest talent and in Lord's day only required a boy to read well, write a letter on a simple subject, correctly spelled with sound grammar, and for him to be able to 'work sums'. Yet emphasizing the technical seems to have been a success and it was not uncommon for Bablake pupils to pass the Department of Science and Art exams in an impressive selection of subjects such as chemistry, mathematics, magnetism and electricity, solid geometry, geometrical drawing, physiography, mechanics and sound, light and heat, freehand model drawing and perspective.

There were tensions though between headmaster Bates, who himself had a scientific bent and had taken a degree in geology in 1898, and the school inspectors appointed by the charity commission. They felt the syllabus was too biased. In 1906, right at the start of Lord's Bablake education, they said the course was '*more restricted than is usual in a school denominated secondary*'. They found the standards of English low with many boys inaccurate and uncouth of expression – an observation we ourselves may heed! French was taught, but badly, and the inspector concluded that a Bablake boy would be '*at an initial advantage in a workshop or machine shop but not fitted for further advancement*.'

Some of what has been written about Leonard Lord suggests that he had a debilitating inferiority complex. If that is the case it might give us an insight into some of his personality traits. And what has been written here about Bablake may help us understand any feeling of inadequacy.

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'Lord, a bitter man, with a huge inferiority complex' is the observation of Martin Adeney in *The Motor Makers* (Collins 1988) while Graham Turner in *The Leyland Papers* (Eyre and Spottiswoode 1971) says 'Lord was both crude in speech and manner and the victim of an inferiority complex'. Barney Sharrett in *Men and Motors of the Austin* (Foulis 2000) relies on an anecdote from Longbridge works manager, Joe Edwards, about Lord's supposed discomfiture in the presence of royalty in 1955, quoting Edwards as saying: 'Lord had an enormous inferiority complex'. Peter Seymour on the other hand describes Lord in *Wolseley Radial Aero Engines* (Tempus 2006) as being '*intensely proud of his humble origins!*'

There are harsh judgments here and maybe we should confront bitterness and/or a sense of inferiority at this early stage in our story as it is only now, the latter at least, could have formed.

If Lord was bitter at this point in his life it must have been over the death of his father, the fact that he and his mother and sister were left in an impoverished state and he was suffering the humiliation of having his schooling paid for by an outside agency. The resentment may have been compounded by a feeling that it was folly for his father to have relinquished stable, worthy, employment to take a pub.

Some of this could well have prompted a sense of inferiority and if we take Seymour's view that '*he was intensely proud of his humble beginnings*' and Miles Thomas's that in a new job he could be proud of his authority '*almost to the point of arrogance*', we do, perhaps, detect an inversion of the inferiority complex, an over compensation and, indeed, much else besides.

On this same count we might briefly quote an item, by an unacknowledged writer, in *Motor* magazine for September 23, 1967. '*Mr Lord finished his formal education early...*' This is untrue. Lord passed through all the grades at Bablake from form one to the upper sixth. In fact, Peter Burden, who wrote the excellent history of the school – *Lion and the Stars* – has commented that the boy's stay was '*a long one for those days*' and as archivist, he is in a better position to judge than anyone.

Yet did Lord himself, preoccupied with, and embarrassed by, perceived – certainly not actual – educational inadequacies, take to 'down-scaling' his time in school. It would be the obvious excuse although he would have done better to utter a favourite quote of his deputy headmaster: '*Education is what is left after everything that has been learnt is forgotten*'.\*

What is of additional interest is that there was a pupil-teacher scheme in operation from Bablake. Senior boys were paid a small amount to give four-days-a-week instruction in the city's elementary schools, only the fifth day being spent at their own desks. So it may have been back to Wheatley Street for Leonard Lord in a bid to bring a few extra pence into the household coffers.

*\*This has been variously attributed to Erasmus, the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> century humanist, the writer Bernard Shaw and 18<sup>th</sup> century statesman, Lord Halifax.*

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We will return later to the closeness of the relationship between Leonard Lord and his mother, which was undoubtedly forged during the Bablake years and at 305 Foleshill Road. But for the moment, and it is why I examined in some detail the history of single hand loom weaving in the area, we need to pose the question as to whether Emma Lord was involved in this activity or something closely associated with it. It is logical that she would have been.

Historically, the textile scene had been vexed; woven with restrictive and sharp practice. At the root of the problem was the dependence of the cottage industry, made up of individual craftsmen assisted by family members, on tariffs to protect them from foreign imports. With such barriers in place there was no incentive to develop new designs or adopt the latest machinery. The Dutch engine loom (contrary to the description, this was not a powered device, simply a multi function machine) and the later Jacquard equipment could have revolutionized the industry and made a factory system viable, but the independent producers would have none of it.

Another impediment was middle men called 'small masters'. They contracted work to the cottage operators but rode rough-shod over both employment and pricing agreements. Thus a struggle between factory and cottage continued for decades until ultimately the whole industry collapsed.

Whether or not Emma Lord was involved in silk weaving, and although the most acrimonious conflicts were several decades before she could have been, she and the whole of Coventry would have been aware of the history and have an opinion. It is beyond doubt that Leonard Lord would also have had a view on what were essentially production engineering and policy issues - both areas that were to become the essence of his genius.

It is eminently understandable that as Lord embarked on his career, then began to take on ever more senior roles calling for authority and presence, he did not wish to delve into the spit and sawdust of *The Hope and Anchor*. One might be tempted to conclude that one of the reasons we have such a sketchy overall impression of him is that throughout his life there was much about '*his humble beginnings*' he sought to obfuscate.

We now have an adolescent who owed little to anyone but his mother and himself. Who was going to have to 'kick those closed doors open' and as he developed in that industrial crucible that was the Foleshill area of Coventry, maybe he was embittered and angered by many things he saw.

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