

Early Industrial Espionage: George Sorocold, John Lombe and the Italians:

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Introduction

In discussing the successful construction and operation of the Lombe silk mill in Derby completed 1722, the important role of civil engineer George Sorocold can sometimes be overlooked. Perhaps also, as a result of the eighteenth century historian William Hutton's writings on the history of Derby, the efforts of the Italians mentioned in the design and construction of the mill are somewhat overstated.

In fact there is little doubt that apart from John Lombe himself, of whom there is of course already much written commendation, the engineer George Sorocold (b. 1666) takes much of the credit for that operation.

According to wikipedia at:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ George Sorocold](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_Sorocold)

"Sorocold achieved national fame, and could be considered Britain's first civil engineer. He was called the Great English Engineer by two of his contemporaries and was the first non-military person to be styled "engineer".. Details of his overall achievements are included in the aforementioned website.

Additionally, the complexity of the operations involved in the construction of the Derby silk mill, are described by wikipedia at:

<https://historyofinformation.com/detail.php?entryid=3734>

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It then becomes clear that the construction work could not have been designed and carried out without the expert guidance of a qualified civil engineer. At the

same time, there is no evidence of any of the Italians having such claim to engineering knowledge.

And whilst Hutton's writings suggest that Nathaniel Guardavaglio, previously at Derby, was later involved in the construction of the Stockport silk mill, records now show that mill was small-scale compared to the Derby mill and took until 1743 to be completely operational (see below).

According to David Stone's article, "Building the Derby Silk Mill" at:

<https://d3hgrlq6yacptf.cloudfront.net/5f19c51d8f523/content/pages/documents/1579974796.pdf>

Thomas Cochet's earlier mill built on the west bank of the River Derwent, a venture that ultimately failed, was at least partly designed by George Sorocold using spinning wheels that were based on a Dutch design.

It is suggested in the article that George Sorocold could have accompanied John Lombe on his travels to Italy in search of information on the more efficient Italian system.

D.S. writes, "There is little doubt that he (Lombe) did indeed go to Italy; he appears to have gone to Leghorn (Livorno) in 1715, but precisely what his assignment was can now only be a matter of conjecture. It has even been suggested that Sorocold went with him. Anyway, he returned to England in 1717 accompanied by some Italian workers."

N.B. Livorno, a city in Tuscany, on the west coast of Italy.

See also: "George Sorocold (1668-1738) An Original Civil Engineer" at:

<http://www.tunaleyfamily.com/george-sorocold.htm>

According to records, two of the Italians stayed behind in Derby after final construction of the silk mill, 1722.

These two Italians, according to these records, were brothers Nathaniel and Ignatio Guardavaglio.

However there are a number of anomalies concerning both the identity of these two brothers and where they came from.

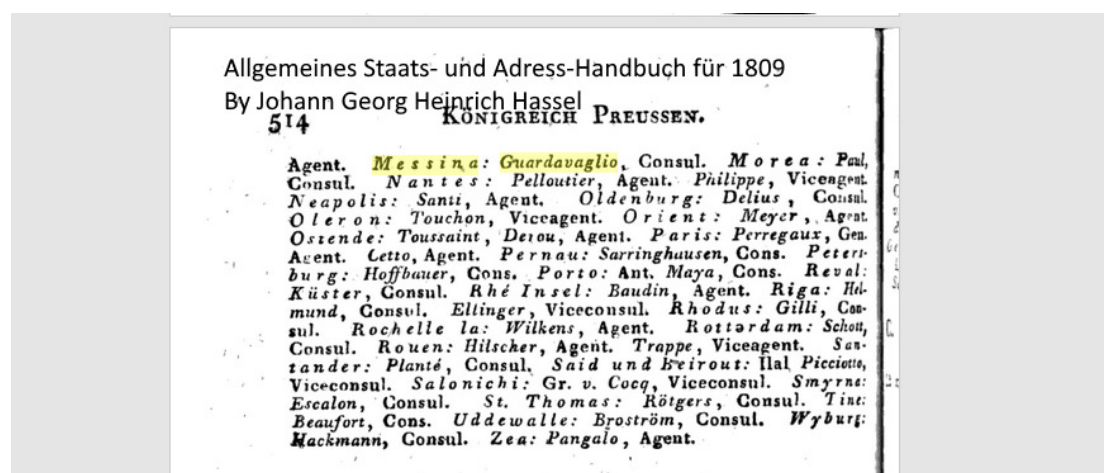
(see also Appendix below).

As follows:

One might have reasonably assumed the Guardavaglios came from mainland Italy. Whilst this has not been disproved it is also interesting to note that a recent search on the Guardavaglio name has produced two relevant records:

The first shows a "Guardavaglio" having the same spelling, consul to the state of Prussia in 1809, and resident in Messina on the island of Sicily.

NB. There was a British base in Sicily at the time to guard against the Napoleonic forces in the Mediterranean.



2. The second record is on the website at:

<https://www.italiansrus.com/surnames/iscgu.htm>

Note the alternative spellings of the surname (1) "Guardivaglio" with the first "a" replaced by an "i" (2) "Guardavaglia" with the last letter "o" replaced by an "a".

N.B. There is no doubt that the handwritten marriage record, 1724, for Ignatio to Hanna Endsor has the spelling of his surname as "Guardavaglio." Likewise for the baptism record of Nathaniel's son, also Nathaniel, in 1732.

With three notable exceptions, these Guardavaglio family members, whatever their correct name spelling, are shown to be from Sicily.

By contrast, the three exceptions include the "brothers" themselves, Ignatio and Nathaniel Guardavaglio of Stockport, along with descendant Elizabeth Guardavaglio who died Stockport 1865. The three stated to be originally from Piedmont, a fact that just happens to fit the William Hutton narrative. In fact the original handwritten baptism record for John Guardavaglio (1726) states "son of Ignatio Guardavaglio, a native of the Kingdom of Sicily" (see Appendix below). The "Kingdom of Sicily" having previously been assumed to mean Piedmont although that location remains unproven.

Yet despite the best efforts of others, it appears that a record has yet to be found that would confirm John Lombe visited any of the efficient Italian silk mills based in Northern Italy.

To conclude, the overall information leaves open the possibility that George Sorocold, no doubt sponsored by John Lombe's half=brother Thomas Lombe, was the true architect of the Old Silk Mill enterprise. And might raise further questions regarding the authenticity of the William Hutton account.

[Appendix: The Guardavaglios](#)

This item supersedes previous accounts by the authors regarding Nathaniel and Ignatio Guardavaglio and Willam Hutton's own account of the "two Italians" who came over with John Lombe around 1717 prior to the construction of Derby's Silk Mill completed 1722.

Following information generously provided by Mr. David Purdy including further BMD records, two records in particular suggest Nathaniel and Ignatio Guardavaglio to be one and the same person, rather than brothers who stayed in Derby until 1732 before moving to Stockport ; that the person known in Stockport

as John Guardavaglio was most likely Nathaniel's son, baptised 1726 at St. Alkmund, Derby ; and that John, the son, had already taken over some of Nathaniel's work prior to the latter's death, 1747.

The two records in question are as follows:

1. Hannah Guardavaglio (nee Endsor) Burial: 8th July 1729: "Buried Hannah wife of Nath Guardivallio", St. Alkmund, Derby

2. Sarah Guardavaglio (nee Gaunt) Burial: November 1761: "Buried Sarah the widow of Nathaniel Guardivaglio", St. Alkmund, Derby.

Yet the respective marriage records for Hannah (1724) and Sarah (1730), as shown below, both give their husband's first name as Ignatio.

And also interesting is that both Hannah and Sarah were buried in Derby, suggesting neither of them moved permanently if at all to Stockport.

Meanwhile, certain secondary records give the date of the second marriage to Sarah Gaunt as 13th January 1729, a date that would precede the burial of first wife Hannah (nee Endsor) on 8th July 1729, and suggesting Ignatio and Nathaniel to be two separate people.

In fact, at the point in history of the marriage, 1729 would have fallen under the Julian calendar whereby the year did not begin until 25 March. So, any event falling before 25 March would be in 1729. Viewed retrospectively, following the change to the Gregorian calendar when the New Year began on 1 January, the date of the marriage in some records would have been noted as 1730.

Indeed, in a recent successful search for the original record, its ordering in the St. Alkmund BMD listings shows the second marriage having taken place a year later, on 13th January 1730, providing further evidence that Ignatio and Nathaniel were in truth one and the same person.

There is one further significant record, details provided also by Mr. David Purdy. An extract from Derby Silk Mill Copy Book states that Ignatio Guardivaglio "who formerly left here to work at Stockport" was buried 29th March 1747 having previously been forced to leave Clayton's mill company as a result of bad eyesight - his burial following the burial of his grandson, Nathaniel, six weeks earlier on 13th February 1747.

Yet whilst people at the Derby Silk Mill, according to this document, knew him as Ignatio, strangely the Stockport burial record gives his first name as Nathaniel, also the name William Hutton used in his book.

[Background to the Hutton Book](#)

According to William Hutton and referring to John Lombe's espionage and escape from Italy, "he (Lombe) took with him two natives who had favoured his interest and his life at risk to their own."

Then, after Lombe's return to Derby, Hutton alleges the following took place, "An artful woman came over (to England) in the character of a friend, associated with the parties, and assisted with the business .She attempted to gain (the confidence of) both the Italians and succeeded with one. By these two, slow poison was supposed and perhaps justly to have been administered to John Lombe who lingered two or three years in agonies and departed.

The Italian ran away to his own country; and Madam was interrogated but nothing transpired except what strengthened suspicion."

Also on the question of the Italians, Hutton adds, "In 1732 the patent (on the Derby mill) expired. A mill was immediately erected at Stockport, in Cheshire, which drew many of the workmen from that of Derby and, among others Nathaniel Gartrevalli, the remaining Italian, who, sixteen years before, had come over with John Lombe; him I personally knew; he ended his days in

poverty; the frequent reward of the man who ventures his life in a base cause or betrays his country."

Extracts from: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Silk_industry_of_Cheshire

"Lombe's patent had been fiercely contested by artisans in Stockport and Macclesfield who looked to supply the Spitalfield silk weavers. When the patent expired (1732) a partnership of six was formed in Stockport, which in essence was a joint stock company, to build a water-powered mill in a bend in the River Mersey, next to Logwood Mill. John Guardivaglio was recruited to manage the new technology. John Clayton, a future Mayor was the partnership leader. It took until 1743 to cut the tunnels to obtain extra water from New Bridge. Seven years later the silk mill owners bought the neighbouring Logwood Mill and converted that to silk. As this was only 23 feet (7.0 m) square it could only be used for ancillary processes. Other mills were (later) built in Macclesfield (1744) and Congleton (1753)".

Also see "THE STRUGGLE FOR WATER SUPPLY TO THE MILLS OF STOCKPORT, by Tony Bonson at:

https://www.themeister.co.uk/hindley/stockport_silk.pdf

This article details how the initial mill built in Stockport was small-scale, far smaller than Lombe's, and that development of the mill continued through to 1743 when the project was finally completed.

[The following BMD Derby and Stockport records offer clarification regarding Nathaniel aka Ignation Guardavaglio](#)

Nathaniel aka Ignatio Guardavaglio		
Nathaniel / Ignatio Guardavaglio =>	<p><u>Marriage 1:</u> "Ignatio Guardavaglio & Hanna Endsor" married 27.9.1724 St Peter's Derby Hannah Burial: 8th July 1729: "Buried Hannah wife of Nath Guardivallio", St. Alkmund, Derby</p>	<p><u>Children</u> bp. John 31.1.1726, St Alkmund, Derby. From original baptism record: "son of Ignatio Guardavalio, a native of the Kingdom of Sicily".</p> <p>N.B. Piemonte (Piedmont) in Northern Italy, was then part of the Kingdom of Sici</p>
	<p><u>Marriage 2:</u> "Married Ignatio Guardivallio and Sarah Gaunt", 13.1.1730, St Alkmund, Derby.</p> <p><u>Sarah Burial:</u> November 1761: "Buried Sarah the widow of Nathaniel Guardivaglio", St. Alkmund, Derby.</p>	<p>Record of one son bp. Nathaniel, 25.4.1732, "the son of Nathaniel Guardavaglio," St Alkmund, Derby.</p>
Death of Nathaniel / Ignatio Guardavaglio =>	<p>"Nathaniell Guardivaglio, of Stockport, labourer, was buried 29th March 1747",</p>	<p>Many thanks to Mr. David Purdy for generously providing an extract from a Derby Silk Mill Copy Book record stating Ignatio Guardivaglio buried that day, 1747. Also that Ignatio had previously been forced to leave Clayton's Park Mill company as a result of bad eyesight.</p>

John Guardavaglio son of Nathaniel aka Ignatio Guardavaglio by Marriage 1

<u>John Guardavaglio</u> bp. 31.1.1726, St Alkmund, Derby.	"son of Ignatio Guardavaglio a native of the Kingdom of Sicily" Married Mary Spencer 18.5.1746, Stockport. Mary buried 6.8.1774. Death: John Guardavaglio (son of Ignatio) buried 14.5.1788, Stockport.	
		<u>Below: their children (grandchildren of Ignatio and Hannah).</u>
		Baptised Nathaniel 19.10.1746 St Mary, Stockport Buried 29.3.1747, Stockport.
		Baptised: Charles 29.11.1747, St Mary, Stockport.
		Baptised: Nathaniel 19.8.1750 St.Mary, Stockport. Buried 27.11.1751, St Mary, Stockport.
		Baptised: Fanny 9.8.1752, St Mary, Stockport.
		From Cheshire baptism. records: "Sarah daughter of John Guardovaglia of Macc."

		Secondary records: Baptised: Sarah Guardavaglio, 2.3.1755, father John, St. Michael, Macclesfield.
<u>Other</u>		
<u>Joseph Guardavaglio</u> <u>(Labourer).</u>	"Joseph Guardivaglio, Labourer" buried 3.2.1756, St Mary, Stockport. Could this be Nathaniel, bp. 25/4/1732, the son of Nathaniel Guardavaglio and Sarah Gaunt (marriage 2) ?	

Other information:

William Hutton born 1723. Became resident in Birmingham 1751 after absconding from his second apprenticeship as a silk stockinger in Nottingham, 1741, to visit Birmingham then a town.

Information as revealed from these records:

1. Hutton wrote, "I personally knew Nathaniel Gartrevalli". This is possible because Hutton (b. 1723) in his book, "The History of Derby" wrote, "My parents, through mere necessity, put me to labour before Nature had made me able." So one can reasonably assume Hutton was working at the Old Silk Mill as a child. However, it would seem from an extract taken from the Derby Silk Mill Copy Book (see above), the Italian worker was known as Ignatio rather than Nathaniel.

2. John Guardavaglio, the son of Ignatio and Hanna, was born 1726 so too young to have been the "John" Guardavaglio in the original partnership. However, the baptism of Sarah Guardavaglio, daughter of John and Mary (Spencer) at St Michael, Macclesfield, 1755, is evidence John Guardavaglio played a part in the building of the silk mill at Macclesfield, 1744, 12 miles away from Stockport. This mill built one year after further developments and completion of the Stockport mill in 1743 and with John Clayton still in charge.

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