

# Locating the D'Aguilar family vault in Edge Hill

Charles Lovatt

This is the story of how—thanks to the Liverpool and South West Lancashire Family History Society (LSWLFHS)—I discovered the graves of my sixth great-grandparents in a churchyard at Edge Hill. I've been researching my family history for around fifteen years and am well acquainted with the online tools offered by Ancestry, FindMyPast, the British Newspaper Archive, and Newspapers.com. I'm also a strong believer in the value of local family history societies such as the LSWLFHS. But sometimes, there really is no substitute for examining original records and walking the streets in person. This story is a case in point.

## The D'Aguilars of Liverpool

Over the past six months, I've been researching this family: Solomon D'Aguilar (c.1753–1817); his wife Margaret (c.1753–1829), née Gilmer or Gilmour; and their children: Emily D'Aguilar (c.1774–1829); Rose D'Aguilar (c.1781–1857); George Charles D'Aguilar (c.1784–1855); (Ann) Maria D'Aguilar (c.1784–1857); and Elizabeth Margaret D'Aguilar (1793–1816).

From online databases, I had already found out that Solomon and Margaret settled in Liverpool during the late 1780s, where Solomon established himself as a merchant importing commodities such as animal hides, sugar, coffee, timber, and rum from the Caribbean. (Shamefully, the goods he imported would have been produced through the labour of enslaved people.) His business prospered, with offices on Brunswick Street and Water Street.

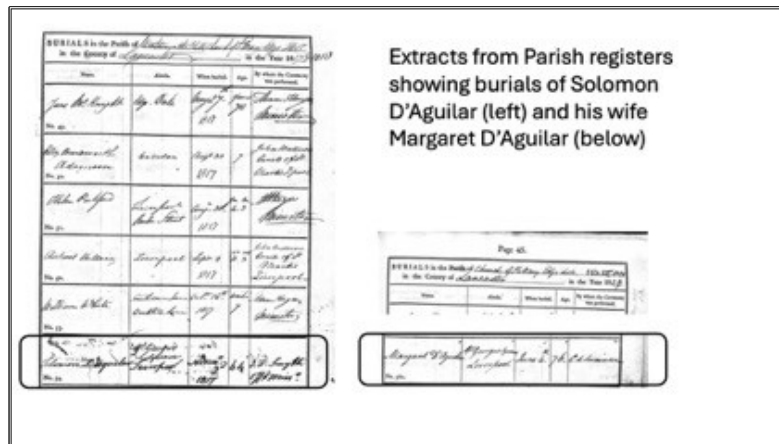
Between 1774 and 1793, Solomon and Margaret had six children. One daughter in particular, Rose, played a key role in this story. In 1800, she married Charles Lawrence (1776–1853); he was a prominent local businessman and later Mayor of Liverpool. Charles served as executor of Solomon's will in 1818 and of Margaret's in 1829. Rose, as the eldest surviving D'Aguilar child in Liverpool when her mother died, she would almost certainly have been the principal mourner.

From around 1795, the D'Aguilars lived at 6 Great George Street. Ten years later, they moved to a newly built home at 11 Great George Square, where they remained for the rest of their lives. There, they entertained leading intellectuals of the time, including Dr James Currie, Dr William Shepherd, and William Roscoe.

## Search for the graves of Solomon and Margaret

As for their final resting place, I knew that Solomon and Margaret were Anglicans. Church registers available online listed their burials as follows: for Solomon, "The Parish of Walton-on-the-Hill, Church of St Mary, Edge Hill"; and for Margaret, "St Mary's Church, Edge Hill, Walton."

(Screenshot 1)



The challenge was to identify the precise location of the churchyard so I could look for any surviving inscriptions. Helpfully, the LSWLFHS sells a PDF of James Gibson's *Liverpool Epitaphs and Monumental Inscriptions*, which, according to the website description, is:

*"... one of the most important sources for the family historian researching 19th-century Liverpool... containing an index of over 10,000 names taken from 56 graveyards and cemeteries—most of which no longer exist."*

This sounded promising. However, I discovered that the volume lists two different Anglican churches named St Mary's: one in Walton (Vol II, a.v.) and one in Edge Hill (Vol IV, a.xiv.). Using the advanced search function, I tried "Aguilar," "Solomon," and "Margaret," but nothing relevant appeared. I searched by year 1818 and 1829, and even browsed the entries manually. Still nothing.

I remain puzzled by this omission. Given Solomon's status, I'd expect a substantial memorial. It seems unlikely Gibson missed it; more likely, the relevant manuscript notes may not have survived.

By March 2025, I had exhausted online and secondary sources. It was time to 'walk the ground'. A six-hour journey lay ahead, so I planned a two-night stay in Liverpool, timing my visit for a Tuesday when LSWLFHS volunteers offer help desk support at the Central Library.

## Research on the ground in Liverpool

At the library, I met two exceptionally helpful volunteers whose names, regrettably, I did not note. They guided me to microfilms of the burial registers from 1817 and 1829, confirming that both Solomon and Margaret were buried in the same churchyard at Edge Hill. It was time to leave the library and go to the cemetery.

Google Maps listed St Mary's Church at 1 South Drive, Wavertree—which is not far from Edge Hill—so I headed there by taxi. But this was clearly the wrong place because it was a Methodist church, built in 1882, without a graveyard.

Outside the wrong church, I re-checked Gibson's *Epitaphs*. It mentioned that the correct St Mary's had opened in 1813 and was near Clare Terrace and Edge Hill railway—on one of Liverpool's highest points.

I took another taxi ride asking the driver for old churches near Edge Hill. He took me to All Saints Church which I found out, from their website, was formerly known as St Mary's, Edge Hill. The name change occurred in 2011 when the parishes of St Cyprian's, St John the Divine, St Philip with St Davids, and St Mary's were merged into one. The website also confirmed the church building foundation stone had been laid in 1813.

### St Mary's, Edge Hill now All Saints, Liverpool

The church, on Irvine Street, is brick-built with a square tower and surrounded by a substantial graveyard.

(photo 1)



The graveyard was well maintained, with most headstones still legible. I began a counter clockwise survey, and on the north-western boundary, I found a heavily overgrown section.

(Photo 2)



After removing armfuls of ivy, I uncovered a headstone bearing the name D'Aguilar. Twenty minutes of clearing revealed the full inscription:

*"Sacred to the memory of Elizabeth Margaret, daughter of Solomon and Margaret D'Aguilar, who departed this life October the 14th 1816, aged 23 years.*

*Also Solomon D'Aguilar, who departed this life 29th of October 1817, aged 64 years.*

*Also Margaret D'Aguilar, wife of the said S. D'Aguilar, who departed this life the 31st of May 1829, aged 76.*

*'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' — Saint Matthew 5:8"*

(Photo 3)





I was delighted to find the monument in such good condition, although it wobbled slightly, suggesting a void beneath.

## An unexpected find

There was more. Adjacent to this headstone lay a second, also originally enclosed by iron railings (now sawn off, likely during wartime salvage). Clearing it was harder, but I uncovered part of the inscription (paraphrasing):

*Sacred to the memory of Joseph D'Aguilar, eldest son of M. and S. D'Aguilar, who died October 20, 1829, aged 52 years.  
Also Margaret D'Aguilar<sup>1</sup>, his wife, who died November 15, 1838.*

(Photo 4)



I hadn't expected Joseph to be buried beside his father. Press reports and court records show he was made bankrupt at least once, and was imprisoned for debt in 1808. I do not know how long he served, if at all, but I imagine that Solomon, a successful merchant with a good reputation, would have been greatly displeased by his son's financial ineptitude.

Joseph died in October 1829, five months after his mother. His estate was modest, valued at under £600. It seems likely that his sister Rose arranged—and paid for—his burial in the family vault.

## Why Edge Hill?

The family lived just a 10-minute walk from St James's Cemetery which is where I would have expected them to be buried. Their son-in-law Charles Lawrence, his wife Rose and

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<sup>1</sup> Margaret nee Renshaw was the daughter of Rev. Samuel Renshaw, who was well known as Rector of Liverpool Parish

the Lawrence family were buried in St James's. But Solomon decided on the more distant St Mary's which was a mile and a half away from their home. Perhaps it was because St Mary's was on a hill top with a good view over the Mersey and docks? Or because the principal benefactor of St Mary's was the timber merchant Edward Masson: perhaps Masson was a friend of Solomon's?

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I count this trip to Liverpool as a great success. It was enormously satisfying to uncover these headstones and what appears to be the vaulted tomb of five family members. Without the help of LSWLFHS and by walking the ground, I would never have located their final resting place.

## Further research

My research into the D'Aguilars is ongoing, and I am particularly interested in:

1. **Margaret Gilmer/Gilmour (c.1753–1829)**

I know little about her origins, but I speculate she may have been born in one of Britain's North American colonies, possibly marrying Solomon there around 1773–74.

2. **Solomon's trans-Atlantic trade**

I am seeking the identities of his trading partners in the Caribbean, North America or elsewhere. Records show that there were members of the D'Aguilar family in Jamaica however there is also evidence that Solomon (born Jewish but converted to Christianity) had fallen out with the Jewish side of his family. I speculate that one of his Caribbean suppliers may have been the Fairfield Estate in Saint James's, Jamaica; this was owned by the Lawrence family.

3. **The daughters: Emily, Rose, and Maria**

Each of these three women led remarkable lives, briefly:

- As a teenager Emily travelled to Bengal around 1790 and lived with her uncle Benjamin D'Aguilar. In June 1792 she married in Benares before leaving her husband and returning to Liverpool (date unknown) where she became the intellectual muse of renowned sculptor John Gibson<sup>2</sup>;
- Rose married into the Lawrence family and as Mrs Rose Lawrence she became a noted author in her own right. And, Rose supported her distant niece Grace D'Aguilar in her career as a writer of note;

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<sup>2</sup> After her death, Gibson made a metre high marble memorial inscribed "*To the memory of Emily Robinson, wife of Gervas Robinson of Benares, who died on the 5<sup>th</sup> April 1829. Executed and erected by John Gibson as a slight tribute of gratitude to the memory of the deceased. Who by her generosity, friendship and love of the arts cherished his early studies.*" This memorial was installed in the Oratory of St James's Cemetery; access to which (according to the notice on railings outside) is by appointment from Walker Art Gallery although I had no success in finding anyone at the Walker who knew anything about it.

- Maria also went to Bengal where she was married at the age of 15. She had three children in Calcutta before being widowed at the age of 19. She sailed back to England, with her three children in 1804 but after this I have no information.

I warmly welcome any comments, corrections, or additional information from fellow researchers [charles@licomp.com](mailto:charles@licomp.com)

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## Location

The graves are located at (modern address) All Saints Liverpool, Irvine Street, Edge Hill, Liverpool L7 8SY, at 53.40669° N, 2.95665° W.



Position of headstones marked on map above  
extract from Liverpool OS 1: 500 sheet CVI.15.1 published 1891  
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