

## Charles Wightman, 28/03/1711 - 13/07/1776



Charles Wightman was a local merchant and alleged smuggler. He was born in Edinburgh to George and Janet Wightman. It is not known when he settled in Anstruther but he married Isabel Grahame in Anstruther Easter in August 1749.

The Wynd bearing his name leads from the water to the former Smuggler's Inn, now converted to private housing. As a Jacobite sympathiser, Charles used his smuggling expertise to hide clansmen escaping the aftermath of the Battle of Culloden in the cellars of the Inn and arranged for them to make their way by ship to France.

However, this was not his only claim to fame, or perhaps notoriety, Charles Wightman was one of the founder members of the gentlemen's club the 'Beggar's Benison' which met twice a year on Candlemass and St Andrew's Day at the ruined Castle of Dreel, home of the Anstruther Family. The Beggar's Benison flourished from 1732 to 1836, its membership occupied by Kirk Ministers, prominent professionals, merchants, officials and nobles.

The old castle was said to have been a square tower of great strength built beside the Dreel Burn, close by the sea. The castle was taken and possibly damaged by Cromwell's army in 1651. Charles II visited the castle in that year, and the ruins were still partly habitable in 1732 but had disappeared by the beginning of the 19th century. Stones from the castle were reused in the walls of the current building on the site.

His son, Charles Stewart Wightman (1750 – 1831), became a merchant and slave owner in Tobago. Charles S Wightman owned the Craighall, Concordia and Lambeau estates in Tobago for which his daughter Elizabeth claimed compensation in 1836-37 under the Slavery Abolition Act 1833. At that time, the enslaved people numbered 163.

Wightman, then living in Eyemouth, also owned the house in Dunbar in which John Muir, the famous Scottish-American naturalist, author, and early advocate of preservation of wilderness, was born.