Henry Williams was an engine erector who mainly worked on engines in the Midlands. These included the Wren’s Nest Forge engine near West Bromwich, and the engines at Coalbrookdale, Ketley and Donnington Wood in Shropshire. The letters are addressed to Matthew Boulton, James Watt, Watt’s assistant William Playfair and the engine firm’s clerk, John Buchanan.


5. Letter. Henry Williams (Ketley) to Matthew Boulton (Soho). 23 Aug. 1781. The bottom half of the letter has been torn away. The back of the sheet has been used for calculations.

6. Letter. Henry Williams (Ketley) to John Buchanan [Soho]. 5 Sep. 1781. His progress with the Coalbrookdale engine. Details of the pumps, expected performance etc.


b. Letter. Dr. William Moore (Penryndee) to Henry Williams. 20 Mar. 1782.


11. Letter. Henry Williams (Coalbrookdale) to John Buchanan (Soho). 29 Sep. 1782. Has started the Coalbrookdale engine. It goes very well, there are no leaks and the boiler raises steam very quickly. They will not want it immediately as there has been so much rain they have water to spare. Will experiment with coal consumption.


Thomas Wilson was Boulton & Watt’s Cornish agent. He also had considerable other business interests in Cornwall.
Summarised “Concerning the ordering of a steam engine with comments on savings, also time required for delivery.”

Summarised “Have been induced to close with Watt’s proposal viz to pay 2/3 of the savings during the time of working, till equal to the amount of 1/3 for 5 years, if it should work long. Re. delivery of castings. Comments upon coal consumption not being settled owing to difficulty of comparison between Welsh and other coals.”

Summarised “Expects Watt in Cornwall. Disappointed at the delay in delivery of materials. Mentions Mr. Bouge.”


Summarised “Had misfortune with flat rod shaft pump. Pump split, have put in new pump above the fracture. Remarks about various engines. Mentions a residence for Mr. Watt.”

Summarised “Comments on the power of the new 63 inch engine. Vacuum 27 inches average. Mentions Carkeet’s bricks.”

Summarised “Comments on the size of the new cylinder, 63 inches. Sends section and plan of Chacewater engine house. Cylinder is 72 inches diameter, 1¼ inches thick. Send bed for beam gudgeon, remarks on other parts of engine and boilers. Steam pipes 12 inches diameter. Water engine at work. Consumption of coal with Bouge’s boiler. Seven engines required, also three for North Downs.”

Summarised “Send draft of engine house. Concerning delivery of castings. When will Wheal Union materials be sent. Particulars of a residence in Cornwall for Watt.”

Summarised “Concerning the ordering of a steam engine with comments on its diameter of 63 inches. Particulars and plan of a residence for Watt in Cornwall.” The floor plan is on the same sheet.

Sketch plan of the layout of engine at Chacewater [?]. Summarised “Enclose Smeaton’s sketches of engines etc. Removing copper tube to mend end of boiler with. Sorry Watt so confined to work, should procure assistance that he may enjoy the fruits of his labours. Rented house for Watt 13 guineas. Iron work is 4" per lb. Wheal Spirit’s performance. Great coat on cylinder.”

3/338 Thomas Wilson, 1778 (6 items) 

Thomas Wilson was Boulton & Watt’s Cornish agent. He also had considerable other business interests in Cornwall.
1. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (Soho). 12 Jan. 1778. Summarised “Difficulty in getting castings delivered. Cylinder to be lengthened. About arrangement of boiler flues. Wheal Spirit engine (Wheal Busy) gives satisfaction – goes 16 strokes, also all say 13 strokes with half an inch of steam. Will soon have flat rods in. Concerning the various mines. Imagines the Wheal Virgin engine will be the last of the type built for the county. About furnishing Watt’s house. Can Watt fix a price for engines supplied to Chacewater.”

2. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (Soho). 22 Jan. 1778. Summarised “Will observe Watt’s restriction about cutting cylinder. Have engaged two good smiths. Also with Wheal Union people about the carriage of goods. Will hand the piston on 3 chains as they will be strong enough.”

3. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (Soho). 24 Jan. 1778. Summarised “About delivery of castings. Submits to Watt’s method of applying fire to boiler. Are to have order for Hallamanin engine. The Wheal Prosper engine order overthrown by Bouge recommending a small cylinder in the same house, to increase the power. Have been asked if you will sell out the engine for £200.”

4. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (Soho). 9 Feb. 1778. Summarised “Concerning cylinder lid. Cannot raise the stone work until the inner cylinder is within the outer. Can arrange boiler nearer cylinder. Wheal Virgin in a bad state. Poldice losing in vein. Had to throw off flat rods owing to water being equal to 12 strokes, although engine could run 13 per minute. A clergyman leaving Cornwall for Essex – his goods to be sold, what is to be done.”


3/339 Thomas Wilson, 1779 (27 items)


2. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt (Soho). 12 Jan. 1779. Summarised “Gives locality of Ale & Cakes boiler, to be the reverse of Poldory. Wheal Chance articles will be signed, have not heard about Hallamanin articles.”


18. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (nr. Birmingham). 12 May 1779. Summarised “Trouble with Hornblower and other erectors, only 4 out of 7 able to work. Expects to have order for Trudgevean.”


22. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (nr. Birmingham). 2 Jul. 1779. Summarised “Joseph Harrison, an erector, arrives in Cornwall and visits the Western and other engines and examines them, and reports. Gives consumption of Ting Tang and Wheal Union. Coal distress, up to 55/- per way. (Quotes tin.)”


24. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (nr. Birmingham). 5 Aug. 1779. Docketed “Wheal Union monthly accounts.” Summarised “Wheal Union and Ting Tang consumption. Remarks on tin required. Joseph Harrison cured Hallamanin air leaks in eduction pipes, will now work as slow as 1 stroke in 5 minutes with beam at per. Mr. Hornblower had the drawing of Ale & Cakes given him. Afraid the vessel Peter is taken. (The vessel did arrive.)”


3/340 Thomas Wilson, 1780 (25 items)

1. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt (Soho). — Feb. 1780. On the same sheet:

Docketed “Ting Tang and Hallamanin monthly account.”
Summarised “Troubles with Wheal Chance engine, goes 11 1/3 strokes with 3 inches of steam. Wishes Mr. Henderson was in Cornwall. Murdock mentioned. Gives Ting Tang and Hallamanin consumption.”

Summarised “Murdock’s account of Wheal Chance engine, water rose when standing 19 fathoms, goes 15 strokes per minute and sinks the water 10 feet in 24 hours. They lifted all the tiers of pump with the air pump. New engine required for Poldice. About employing engineers, also about Hornblowers.”

Docketed “Account of value of 1/10 of Wheal Chance mine.”
Summarised “Eduction pipes not delivered, is searching for them. Murdock at Wheal Union, engine goes 12 strokes per minute, is 18 fathoms down the 5th lift, pump is troublesome. Received £30, can pay Murdock’s wages etc. Account of old materials and 1/40 share. Also about taking shares. Poldice engine gives trouble especially in starting. Our engine (Chacewater) works well with one inch of steam, but boilers very troublesome.”

Summarised “Suppose Murdock is in the West. Poldice the same. Dick Mitchell is at Poldice. Hornblower is better of his disorder.”

Docketed “Chacewater working barrel.”
Summarised “Complaints about pump work. Breakages. Remarks on various engines.”

Docketed “Ting Tang and Hallamanin monthly accounts.”

On the same sheet:
Cash account, 16 Mar. 1780, and account of William Murdock’s expenses.
With a postscript by Logan Henderson.
Docketed “Account of cash and disbursements.”
Summarised “Concerning payments of various sums and copy of Day Book.”

Docketed “Concerning Ale & Cakes boiler.”
Summarised “About copper plates for Ale & Cakes boiler pipes. Mr. Murdock and Henderson will examine exhaustion valve.”

Docketed “Re. sale of tin.”
Summarised “Concerning sale of tin. Mistake about bevil plates.”

Summarised “Mrs. Watt [returned to Soho]. Poldice consumption, also Wheal Chance. Murdock has made low valve good.”

Docketed “Monthly account of engines.”
Summarised “Wheal Chance, Hallamanin and Ting Tang consumption. Poldice counters on, have broken gudgeon of balance beam. Surprised at savings being so great. Concerning the sale of Wheal Union engine to Dolcoath.”
Summarised “Concerning money matters. At Wheal Chance they compute the savings in a
way of their own, also pressed to buy the 1/40 share. Glad to hear of success in copying
matters, but hopes the engines will be the best horse. Mr. Daniell recommended to Boulton’s
friend at Leghorn.”

1780.
On the same sheet:
Docketed “Poldice new engine to be fixed on the new shaft. Hornblower to erect this engine
and to be paid the same as Bouge was for Wheal Chance, and Dick Mitchell to keep it in
order afterwards. Remarks about Hornblower and his enemies. P.S. by Henderson
concerning the progress of engine erections.”

On the same sheet:
Table. Account of Engines in May 1780.
Docketed “Monthly account of engines.”
Summarised “Consumption of Wheal Chance, Hallamanin, Ting Tang, Poldice. Payments
promised. Scorrier turns out well.”

Docketed “With draft of £20.9.4 on account of Wheal Chance.”
Summarised “Sends drafts for £20 and £79. Other money matters. Poldice will stop very
soon, but will not sell.”

Summarised “Will forward tin. Met with Mr. Wilkinson at Bersham. New load at Wheal
Chance turns out very well. Wheal Fat very rich, Black Dog much better. Ting Tang rich.”

Summarised “Concerning alterations to Poldice new boiler. About the sale of T. Dudley’s
estate at Scorrier. All engines doing well. Plates for Poldice new boiler are shipped.”

On the same sheet:
Table. Account of Engines in July 1780.
Docketed “Monthly account of engines.”
Summarised “Wheal Chance, Hallamanin, Wheal Union, Ting Tang, Poldice and Tresavean
consumption. Concerning reductions in savings charged. Wheal Virgin adventurers wish for
a yearly sum. Ale & Cakes house stands well. Chacewater makes £1500.”

On the same sheet:
Table. Account of Engines in August 1780.
Docketed “Monthly account of engines.”
Summarised “Wheal Union, Wheal Chance, Hallamanin, Tresavean and Ting Tang
consumption. Price of coals altered. Boulton is in Cornwall.”

Enclosing (b) below.
Docketed “Mr. Wilson’s account of engines in Sep. 1780.”
Summarised “Will send Mr. Pearson accounts. Pleased at the prospect of having so many
engines as the setting to work of Wheal Virgin and Poldice will employ.”

b. Table. Account of Engines in September 1780.
Figures for Wheal Chance, Hallamanin, Ting Tang, Tresavean, Poldory.
Docketed “Mr. Wilson’s account of engines in Sep. 1780.”
Summarised “Having lost accounts desires Mr. Pearson to send him copies. Boulton still in Cornwall.”

24a. Letter. Martin Magor (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt [Soho]. 9 Nov. 1792.
Kept with (b) below. On the same sheet:
Transcript of invoice. 28 blocks of tin shipped for Boulton & Watt.
[Magor was shipping the tin on Wilson’s orders.]
Docketed “Thomas Wilson 6 Novemr. 1780. Invoice of tin.”


Enclosing (b) below.
Summarised “Has been with Mr. Boulton at Cusgarne. Boulton hurts his hand. New boilers to work at Chacewater. Will get money for letter copying machines sent into the neighbourhood.”

b. Table. Account of Engines October & November Months 1780.
Figures for Hallamanin, Wheal Chance, Tresavean, Ting Tang, Poldory, Ale & Cakes.
Docketed “Mr. Wilson’s monthly account of engines Oct. & Nov. 1780.”

3/341 Thomas Wilson, 1781 (20 items)

Thomas Wilson was Boulton & Watt’s Cornish agent. He also had considerable other business interests in Cornwall.

Wilson’s letters were kept in yearly bundles. The letters in this bundle were addressed to James Watt and Matthew Boulton, and the Chief Cashier and Bookkeeper James Pearson.

Summarised “Concerning accounts.”

Summarised “Are 8 pieces of oak to be used instead of 6 for the sake of 1 inch overall. Price of smiths’ work, also bad work. Concerning the making of spelter and brass in Wales.”

Not dated – date taken from the docket. Summarised “£39.6.0 for six copying machines. The materials for Pool engine had to be defended against a French privateer, Murdock defends them and fires upon the enemy. Murdock to superintend the workmen at Wheal Virgin.”

Docketed “Covering £500 on account of Wheal Chance.”

Docketed “Sketch of monthly account and remittance of £40 Hallamanin and £40.18.2 Wheal Treasury.” Summarised “Concerning tin – the Lamb mark is of a Western house. About workmen. Kestall adit house half-built. Gives various savings. Wheal Treasury only burns 20 bushels per day. Had no snow.”

Docketed “With state of Wheal Chance account.”
The letter begins “Dear Sir.” On the same sheet.
Invoice of tin shipped for Boulton & Fothergill.
Docketed by James Pearson. Docketed “With invoice of 10 blocks of tin and state of sundry accounts.” Summarised “Will have order for Wheal Crenver 48 inch and Tregashis 40 inch soon. Glad one tube is to be tried in the Wheal Virgin boilers “as it has been an opinion held by us Chacewater engineers that it will be superior to two”.”

Enclosing (b) below. Summarised “Coals are becoming scarce. Fleet of colliers arrived. Kestall adit house ready for roof. The various mines are showing signs of improvement.”

b. Table. Account of Engines in February 1781. 
On the same sheet:
Account. Copy of Day Book in February 1781.

Mis-dated as 1780 by Wilson. Summarised “Journeying to Yorkshire.”

Summarised “Sorry he has failed to obtain the necessary lodgings. Will see Watt later on about engines for Wales.”

Summarised “Sends monthly accounts. Impatient for Pool engine materials from Bersham.”

Summarised “Old brass 6” per cwt. Materials for 3 engines at Wheal Virgin arrived. Will soon expect to see Mr. Watt, and workmen, as all at present are engaged in the West. 5 eduction pipes arrived.”

With a separate wrapper. Summarised “£1500 can be advanced, security United Mines or Dolcoath deeds. Mr. Watt and family arrives in Cornwall.”

Summarised “Drafts for £2000. Mr. Daniell sells tin at Birmingham.”

Summarised “Concerning the advancing of £2000.”

Summarised “Concerning the loan of £2000. Remarks on Hornblower.”

Summarised “Concerning amounts received from the various mines.”

Summarised “Sent drawings. Has been hurt by a horse.”

Summarised “Concerning the advance of £2000.”
*Re-directed to Boulton at Soho. Summarised “Remarks concerning tin. Troubles with workmen. Trevithick and Vivian to value Ting Tang engine.”*

3/342 Thomas Wilson, 1782  
(29 items)

*Mis-dated as 1781 by Wilson.*  
*Summarised “Concerning money matters.”*

*Summarised “Concerning money matters and abatement of savings. Cautions Boulton about going too deep in Polgooth shares.”*

*Summarised “Shipped casks of clay. Stone etc. Other small matters.”*

*Summarised “Seems to be a general gloom presiding over the whole family of Hornblowers. About altering the stroke of Trevascus.”*

*Docketed “Account of consumption of Dolcoath old engine, 63 inch cylinder.”*  
*Summarised “Captain Trevithick gives trouble concerning savings. Wedgwood in the county. Have been relieved by a large fleet of colliers.”*

*On the same sheet:*  
*Transcript of letter. William Harris (Rosewarne) to Thomas Wilson. 11 Jun. 1782.*  
*Summarised “Comments on the trouble caused by Captain Trevithick’s remarks on savings, and the system of calculating the same. House for Hallamarin finished and cylinder in.”*

*Summarised “The influenza plague. Concerning money matters. About the grass etc. at Cusgarne House.”*

*Summarised “Muir (an erector)’s debts. Bull desires an advance of wages. Remarks on the method of computing the (table of) savings.”*

*Summarised “Concerning money matters. James Law received orders to go to Ireland. Glad Mr. Fothergill’s death will occasion no bad effect in business. Lawson desires an advance of 2/- in wages.”*

*Summarised “Concerning money matters. Trevascus articles sent to be engrossed and remarks thereon. An account of the various mines at work.”*

*Summarised “James Law’s illness the cause of his not going to Ireland, will consult with Murdock about a substitute. Jethro Hornblower reports their engine went to work the 6th inst.”*

*Summarised “James Law will set out for Ireland as his health is now restored.”*
13. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt (Soho). 25 Jul. 1782. Summarised “Murdock will attend the cleansing of Wheal Chance engine. The ropes of hot water bucket wear rapidly, better order a new condenser etc. No account yet of the performance of Hornblower’s engine, hears that all of them in this county set out for Bristol tomorrow.”


17. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt (Soho). 15 Aug. 1782. Summarised “Heavy rains. Pool mine poor. Will put in flat rods to try Penhillick. Have got them to work at Wheal Fat, the engine works well since Murdock attended it. Will get him to make a drawing of injection pipe.”


19. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to Boulton & Watt (Soho). 24 Aug. 1782. Summarised “Law (an erector) sailed for Bristol. Wheal Fat sump deeper than Wheal Chance, have all the water there, had the stroke lengthened to suit.”


22. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt (Harper’s Hill). 19 Sep. 1782. Docketed “About purchasing of shares in Poldice.” Summarised “Hopes Boulton has not been prevented from coming to Cornwall to counteract the Hornblowers’ boast of their engine’s performance at Radstock. Works 14 lbs. on the inch, 14 strokes per minute, loaded to 17 lbs. Hornblowers have left propositions to alter engines to their principles. Will send Wedgwood’s clay. About purchasing of shares in Poldice.”


28. Letter. Thomas Wilson (Chacewater) to James Watt [Harper’s Hill]. 21 Dec. 1782. Summarised “The obstacles of lowering pumps etc. overcome. Water moderate everywhere. New pump for Poldice. (Poldice) new engine pump to be 17 inches diameter. New shaft to be sunk for Chacewater; Mr. Boulton having agreed to give up one year’s savings.”

Re-directed to Boulton at Soho.
Summarised “Advises which way to vote for giving the position of Pursership at Wheal Virgin.”

Summarised “Wheal Virgin (Elvan engine) boilers neglected causing damage to them. Concerning table of comparisons of consumptions.”


On the same sheet: 
Ground Plot of Mr. Bennallack’s House at Chevela. 
Docketed “With plan of Chevela.”


Docketed “About winding Dolcoath ores.”

Docketed “About valuing Wheal Virgin engines.”


Docketed “Account of profits on Wheal Virgin.”


Docketed “Account of remittances.”

Docketed “With remittance £1340.”

On the same sheet: 

Docketed “With monthly accounts.”

Not dated [14 Aug. 1783?]. 
Docketed “Aug. 1783.”


