

## William FLETCHER (1775-1834)

*The Mechanics Magazine 1830 p249 – The Steam Navigation Enquiry*

Mr William Fletcher, of Milton, one of the proprietors of the Gravesend Steam Company, examined – Has been occupied on the river for forty-three years – Was instrumental in getting up a petition presented to Parliament in August, from the inhabitants of Gravesend, against a bill which was then before the house, for limiting the speed to 6 miles per hour. The crowded state of the Pool, and the cross sets of the tide, render it frequently necessary that a steam vessel, in order to avoid receiving damage, or doing it to others, should be at liberty quickly to alter its position, by advancing or retiring at its greatest power of speed; and if this discretion (liable as it is to legal responsibility when abused) is not continued to the persons navigating the vessel, the most dangerous consequences may be expected to ensue. Witness has been on board of a Berwick smack when going 7 miles an hour; and the Margate and Gravesend sailing packets used occasionally to exceed 7 miles, particularly on the wind coming abaft. That the London wherries are endangered, is owing to their being so small and shallow, that they are only safe in smooth water. At Gravesend, and all other places where steam vessels resort, except London, there are plying boats properly adapted to the agitated state of the water. In London, a wherry capable of supporting not more than half a ton weight, is licensed to carry as many passengers as a Gravesend boat, which can support two tons. The injury which open barges and other craft are reported to sustain, arises principally from their overloading, and the improper manner in which they take in their cargoes in the river, in order to avoid the trouble of trimming. For example, a coal barge is put close alongside a ship, and half of the cargo shot into one side; then, in order to save the trouble of trimming, the barge is turned round to the other side, to receive the other half. The barge will be thus depressed on one side to the water's edge; and any sort of vessel coming along will cause the water to flow over into it. Has himself, in going along in a sailing boat, chucked the water into a barge so circumstanced many times. If only such boats as are adapted to the improved state of commerce and science were permitted to be used below London Bridge, and if ships and barges were properly moored, the alleged danger to the public would be principally, if not entirely removed. There ought to be no wherries less than the Greenwich wherries; all the difference to the waterman would be, that they would have to pull harder against the tide, and go slower. The London wherries are now much less safe than formerly. The prize wherry is won by a powerful man, and others to compete with him, have also had very small boats built. By a regulation of the Court of Aldermen, steam vessels are not to go faster than five miles an hour through the Pool; but at certain times of the strong ebb, the tide will run nearly five miles, and therefore a vessel might as well be made fast as go at that speed. Sailing vessels would be as liable to inconvenience from being restrained in their speed as steamers; with such difference only as may arise from the great length of steamers. Can stop a steam vessel quite dead, in about three times her length; after which she goes astern; the effect is the same as when a waterman pushes back with his oars. The swell in the case of the steam boats of the witness's Company, proceeds from the bows; the paddle wheels only obstruct their own gang-way; thinks the danger from the swell would be entirely removed by the adoption up the river, of boats similar to the Gravesend ones. Would not hesitate to go in one of these boats on board a Margate steam packet, when going 13 miles an hour. The Greenwich boats are very good ones, and are managed by one man. Does not think that any regulations would make the captains of steamers more careful than they already are. Such a place as the Pool is not navigated without accidents. Has in his own (sailing) vessels broken bowsprits, booms, and so on, which he would not have done if he could have helped it.

*National Archives Will Reference Prob 11/1826*

This is the last Will and testament of me William Fletcher of Milton next Gravesend in the county of Kent Waterman.

First I will and direct that all my just debts funeral expenses and the charges of proving and other ... relating to this my will shall be fully paid and satisfied and I nominate institute and appoint my wife Sarah Fletcher executor and my friends Henry Warren of Gravesend in the said County Surgeon and Apothecary Thomas King of Gravesend aforesaid Victualler and Richard Langley of Gravesend aforesaid ...executors of this my Will and

I give and bequeath unto my grandson William Fletcher the only child of my late son Elliott Fletcher the legacy or sum of one hundred pounds and direct that the same shall be paid unto him as soon as conveniently may be after the marriage or decease of my said wife which shall first happen in case my said Grandson shall then have attained his age of twenty one years and my will is in case my said Grandson shall not have attained his age of twenty one years on the death or marriage of my said wife the said sum of one hundred pounds shall be laid out and invested in or upon any of the Parliamentary stocks or funds of Great Britain or upon real Securities in England at interest and that the same together with all accumulations thereof shall be paid unto my said Grandson on his attaining the age of twenty one years and in case my said Grandson shall depart this life under the age of twenty one years and without leaving lawful issue then I direct that the said sum of one hundred pounds shall sink into and form part of my residuary estate and effects and I do declare that the said Legacy of one hundred pounds shall be in lieu and full satisfaction of all share and interest which as the representative of his deceased father or otherwise my said Grandson might take or be entitled to of and in my residuary estate and effects it being my intention that my said Grandson shall not participate with my children or my other grandchildren on the division of my residuary estate and effects and I direct limit and appoint give and devise all and every my freehold messuages tenements hereditaments and premises situate and being in the parishes of Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend in the said County of Kent or either of them or elsewhere and all other my real estate whatsoever and wheresoever unto the said Henry Warren Thomas King and Richard Langley their heirs and assigns forever upon trust that they the said Henry Warren Thomas King and Richard Langley or the survivors or survivor of them or the heirs or assigns of ... survivor do and shall as and when they or he shall think proper after my decease will and absolutely dispose of the same ... together or in parties by Public Auction or Private Contract as to them or him shall seem expedient for the best price or prices in money that can be reasonably had and obtained for the same respectively and to convey and assure the same accordingly and my will is that the monies which shall arise by or from the sale or sales of my real estate shall be deemed to be a part of my personal estate and that the rents and profits of my real estate in the meantime and until the same shall be sold or of so much thereof as shall be remaining unsold shall be ... to be a part of my personal estate and that the same monies and rents and profits shall be subject to the dispositions hereinafter made ... my Personal Estate and the ... thereof respectively

And I give and bequeath unto the said Henry Warren Thomas King and Richard Langley their executors ... and assigns all and singular my household furniture monies and securities for money stocks and funds and all other my Personal Estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever upon the trusts and for the intents and purposes hereinafter declared ... the same that is to say upon trust to permit my wife to have the use of my household furniture plate linen and china or so much thereof as they shall think fit during her life or until she marries again and upon trust to continue and carry on the business whereon I now am or may be engaged or any other business of the like nature or any other business they my executors or admons shall think proper and to put off or discontinue the same when and as they shall think fit and from time to time to build and

purchase and to sell and dispose of any boat or boats vessel or vessels or any share or shares thereon and to employ the same as may be thought fit and to sell and dispose of all or any part of my household furniture and other personal estate and to employ the whole or any part of the money arising from the sale of my real estate and the whole or any part of the money arising from the sale of my personal estate in such business or to invest the same or any part thereof in or upon any of the Parliamentary stocks or funds of Great Britain or upon Real Securities at interest and to sell and dispose of or vary alter or transport such Securities for other securities of the like nature when and as often as it may seem expedient and my will and meaning is that all and every the gains and profits of such business and the dividends and interest of my personal estate effects and the rents and profits of my real estate until the same shall be sold and after such sale then the dividends interest and proceeds of the money arising from the sale thereof or ... thereof respectively as may from time to time be ... shall during the natural life of my said wife or until she marries again be paid or applied for or towards her cloathing maintenance and support and the cloathing maintenance support and education of all my children whether born before or after my decease or such of them as in the opinion of my executors or admors shall stand in ... thereof and be paid to ... by my said wife as long as she duly applies the same for those purposes and from and after the decease or marriage of my said wife which shall first happen then for or towards the maintenance support and education or otherwise for the ... of all my children or such of them as in the opinion of my executors or admors shall from time to time think proper until the youngest of my children who shall live to the age of twenty one years shall attain such age and my will and desire is that in case the rents and profits interest dividents and proceeds of my real and personal estate and effects shall be insufficient for the cloathing maintenance and support of my said wife and the cloathing maintenance support and education of my children my executors or admors shall be at liberty to pay or apply for the same purposes the whole or any part of the principal monies arising from my real and personal estates when and as they shall think proper and that my said executors or admors may pay or apploy any reasonable sum or sums of money out of such principal or other monies for the placing out any of my children as an Apprentice or otherwise for his her or their benefit during his her or their minority and subject to the provisions hereby made for the cloathing maintenance and support of my said wife and for the cloathing maintenance support and education of my children

I do give and bequeath all the principal monies arising from my real and personal estate and all such stocks funds and securities and the dividends interest and proceeds thereof and such rents and profits unto all my children to be divided between or among them share and share alike the shares of my daughters to become vested in them respectively on their attaining their respective ages of twenty one years or on the respective days of their marriage and the shares of my sons to become vested in them respectively on their attaining their respective ages of twenty one years and to be paid or transferred as soon as conveniently may be after the marriage or decease of my said wife which shall first happen all my children having then attained the age of twenty one years or after the youngest of my children who shall live to the age of twenty one years shall have attained such age of my said wife be their dead or married again provided always and I do hereby declare my will to be that if any of my sons shall depart this life before he or they shall attain his or their age or respective ages of twenty one years without leaving any lawful issue or if any of my daughters shall happen to die before she or they shall attain her or their age or respective ages of twenty one years or be married then the share or shares of him her or them so dying shall go ... and belong to the survivors or survivor or others or other of such children and be equally divided among if more than one share and share alike and the same shall become vested and payable at such ages and times as his her or their original portions or portions are hereby directed to become vested and payable or transferable as aforesaid and in case of the death of any other of my children before such ... or surviving share or shares shall become vested as aforesaid and every such ... or surviving share shall again be subject and liable to such right share contingency or condition of ... to and amongst the survivors or survivor of others or other of my children as hereinbefore is provided ... the said original portion of portions provided nevertheless and it is my will that if any of my children shall have left lawful issue such issue shall have and be entitled to such share or shares as will accruing as original as his her or their deceased parent

or parents would if living have had or been entitled to under this my will such share or shares to be respectively paid or transferred to such issue at such age or time as in hereinbefore declared with respect to the payment or transfer of their parents share and such parents share or shares to be divided between his her or their issue in equal shares if more than one and if but one then wholly to that one divided also and my will is that on the final division of my property as regard shall be had to the amount of the monies paid or applied for the maintenance support education and apprenticing of my children and my will is that my said trustees and my executors admons or assigns shall be at liberty from time to time when and as it shall be deemed expedient to buy in my said real and personal estate and other property hereby made saleable or any part or parts thereof and to resell the same at any future time or times by public auction or private contract without being liable to answer for any dimunition in part or other loss or expenses which may be occasioned thereby and that the receipt and receipts of the said Henry Warren Thomas King and Richard Langley or of any or either of them or of the heirs executors admons or assigns of either of them for the money for which my real and personal estates or other property hereby made saleable shall be respectively sold shall from time to time be a sufficient surcharge or sufficient discharges to the purchaser or purchasors of my real and personal estate and other property hereby made saleable and every or any part or parts thereof for his her or their purchase money or so much thereof as shall be therein acknowledged or expressed to have been ... and that such purchaser or purchasors his her or their heirs executors admons or assigns or any of them shall not afterwards be obliged to ... to the application or be answerable or accountable for any loss misapplication or non application of such purchase money so ... or any part or parts thereof and that they my said trustees executors or admons shall not be charged with or accountable for any more money than they shall respectively derive on virtue of this my will nor with or for any volunteray loss which may happen to the said trust estate and effects or any part thereof no the one of them for the other or others of them nor for the ... receipts... defaults or disbursements of the other or others of them but each of them for his own acts deeds receipts neglects defaults and disbursements only And also that it shall and may be lawful to and for my said executors and trustees and the survivors and survivor of them and the executors and admons of such survivor to ... retain and reimburse himself and themselves out of the money which shall come to their hands by virtue of this my will all such costs charges damages and expenses as they or any of them shall sustain bear pay or be put unto on account or by reason of this my will or the trusts hereby in their ... and my will and meaning is that my said wife shall not after her marrying again act or have any power or authority such a power as an executrix or otherwise under this my will and that upon her marrying again all power and authority shall devolve on my other executors and the survivor of them his executors or admons in the same manner as if my said wife had died in the lifetime of my said executors and that such sum or sums of money as may hereafter be paid or advanced by to or for the use of my children respectively shall be deemed a part or part of their respective legacies or shares in every case in which my intention to have them so considerd shall appear by any amount or memorandum signed by me And I do hereby revoke and make void all former wills testaments and codicils by me made In witness whereof I the said William Fletcher the testator have to this my last will and testament contained in six sheets of paper of my hand and seal that is to say to the first five sheets thereof my hand and to this sixth and last sheet thereof my hand and seal the seventh day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and thirty two. William Fletcher [signed] Signed sealed published and declared by the said William Fletcher the testator as and for his last will and testament in the presence of us who in his presence at his request and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses. Elizabeth Higham, Robert Higham, Gravesend, Charles Pearson Solicitor Gravesend.

Whereas I william Fletcher of Milton next Gravesend in the County of Kent Waterman have duly made and published my last will and testament in writing bearing date the seventh day of May now last past and I have thereby appointed Richard Langley of Gravesend in the said County Grocer one of my Executors and Trustees and whereas I am desirous of appointing my son William Fletcher an Executor and Trustee of my will in the place and stead of the said Richard Langley now therefore I do hereby in every respect revoke and make void the direction limitation and

appointment gift and devise contained in my said will of all and every my freehold messuages tenements hereditaments and premises situate and being in the Parishes of Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend in the said County of Kent or either of them or elsewhere and of all other my real estate whatsoever and wheresoever unto the therein named Henry Warren and Thomas King and the said Richard Langley their heirs and assigns and do hereby direct limit and appoint give and devise all and every my freehold messuages hereditaments and premises situate and being in the Parishes of Gravesend and Milton next Gravesend aforesaid or either of them or elsewhere and all other my real estate whatsoever and wheresoever unto my said son William Fletcher and the said Henry Warren and Thomas King their heirs and assigns for ever upon the several trusts and for the several ... intents and purposes expressed and declared of and ... the same in and by my said will and I revoke and make void in every respect the gift and bequest contained in my said will of all and singular my household furniture monies and securities for money stocks and funds and all other my personal estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever unto the said Henry Warren Thomas King and Richard Langley their executors admors and assigns And I give and bequeath all and singular my household furniture monies and securities for money stocks and finds and all other my personal estate and effects whatsoever and wheresoever unto my said son William Fletcher and the said Henry Warren and Thomas King their executors admors and assigns upon the several trusts and for the several ... intents and purposes expressed and declared of and ... the same in and by my will and I also revoke and make void the appointment of the said Richard Langley as one of my trustees and executors and do appoint in his place and stead my said son William Fletcher a Trustee and Executor of my said Will and declare that he the said William Fletcher shall as such trustee and executor be vested with the same powers and authorities and entitled to the same indemnities in every respect as if he had been appointed by my said Will which I do hereby ratify and confirm in every respect in which the same is not hereby altered In witness whereof I the said William Fletcher the testator have to this Codicil contained on the first and second sheets of my said Will set my hand to the first side hereof and my hand and seal to the second side hereof the tenth day of December in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and twenty two. William Fletcher [signed] Signed sealed published and declared by the said William Fletcher the testator as and for a codicil to his last Will and Testament in the presence of us who at his request in his presence and in the presence of each other have hereunto subscribed our names as witnesses – Elizabeth Higham, Robert Higham, Charles Pearson Solicitor Gravesend.

Proved at London with a Codicil the 29<sup>th</sup> January 1834 before the wonderful George Matham Doctor or Laws and Surrogate by the Oaths of Sarah Fletcher widow the relict Henry Warren and Thomas King the Executors named in the will and William Fletcher the Son the Executor named in the Codicil to whom Admon was granted having been first sworn only to administer.