



## Prize Papers – Launch of Spanish materials online

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**1. Schedule of day**

10.30am Registration

11:00am Welcome and housekeeping

11:10am History of project from project director, Prof. Dr Dagmar Freist

11:20am Speech by Spanish Ambassador, José Pascual Marco

11:30am View documents - (during the document display, the project team will be joined by external researchers associated with the project who have worked on the Spanish records presented.)

11.45am Media interviews and filming

12:30pm Event closes

## 2. What are Prize Papers?

The historic practice of capturing enemy ships during wartime has resulted in a unique collection at The National Archives. Between 1652 and 1815, British privateers and naval vessels captured roughly 35,000 ships, from which they seized hundreds of thousands of papers that survive to this day as the Prize Papers – a “prize” being a captured ship. This enormous archive includes 160,000 undelivered letters intercepted on their way across the globe, many of which remain unopened, as well as the personal archives of passengers, ship’s papers like logbooks or passports and small objects, such as jewelry or textile samples. It is also a polyglot collection, with documents in over 20 languages, with the majority of the collection being in French, Spanish and Dutch.

Largely unexplored by researchers, the Prize Papers is a trove of documents and artefacts that track the daily lives of people around the world, preserving the voices of men, women and children during the early modern period.

A collaboration project between the University of Oldenburg in Germany and the UK National Archives is digitising the entire Prize Papers collection, making it available online in an open access database: the Prize Papers Portal. Funded by the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony, the Project’s work includes in-depth cataloguing, conservation and imaging of the physical documents, followed by the creation of research-oriented metadata and the publication of the roughly 3.5 million document images online.

It also pursues and collaborates on research projects that use the Prize Papers, supporting work on seafaring, migration, social and family history, international trade, diplomacy, warfare, communication, linguistics as well as on transnational and cross-country phenomena.

Project homepage: [www.prizepapers.de](http://www.prizepapers.de)

### 3. The Spanish Prize Papers

Today we are launching online, thousands of papers from captured Spanish ships which were all taken by the British during the Wars of Jenkins' Ear (1739–48) and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740–48).

The Bourbon powers – Spain and France – and Britain were on opposing sides in this period and fought one another at sea, as in the 1741 Battle of Cartagena de Indias, the 1744 Battle of Toulon and 1747 Battle of Cape Finisterre, but also through economic warfare, as the privateers of each nation targeted merchant shipping.

This launch makes papers from and relating to around 130 Spanish ships captured by the British during these wars available online. Digital copies are now available in our open access database, the Prize Papers Portal, with document level metadata that makes the material easily searchable for users. A selection of case studies will be published on the Project's website on Friday, which serve as research guides, with commentaries on particular ships captured and the unique collections of material that survive from each of them.

Among the ships captured during this war was *Nuestra Señora de Covadonga*, a Spanish galleon carrying silver worth over £60 million travelling from Acapulco to Manila, which was taken in the Pacific by the British Commodore George Anson. Papers surviving from this vessel include official documents that detail life aboard and the functioning of the Manila galleons as well as personal and official letters, intended for delivery in the Philippines.

Another ship was *La Ninfa*, a Spanish vessel in transatlantic trade carrying a different kind of treasure: over a hundred letters sent from men and women in Spain to Mexico that was captured by the British "Royal Family" privateer squadron.

These records are all unknown to researchers and provide insights into everyday life in Spain, the Caribbean, and Central and South America, but also detail the political and military conflicts of the period.

This is the first tranche of Spanish records and in future more letters, papers and objects taken from thousands of Spanish ships will be digitised over the coming years, making the Project of ongoing interest for anyone with an interest in the history of Spain, the former Spanish colonies and the wider world.

Prize Papers Portal: <https://portal.prizepapers.de>

Case Studies: <https://www.prizepapers.de/case-studies/case-study-spanish-ships>

#### **4. Project Structure and Partners**

Prize Papers Project staff are based in London at The National Archives UK, at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg and at the Common Library Network (VZG) in Göttingen, Germany. The work of the Project spans from surveying, cataloguing and digitising newly discovered records to academic collaborations and outreach, making the collection available online and enabling international research worldwide, barrier-free, with open access to every single piece of paper of this collection online.

Work begins at TNA, where a senior archivist and two records specialists oversee sorting, cataloguing and collection research, led by Dr Amanda Bevan. They take vast sets of often disordered papers, identify materials and collect them according to the ship they came from. A project conservator at TNA then repairs, cleans and conserves the papers preparing the documents for digitization and ensuring that they can survive in the long term. TNA's collection care department also conduct research on the collection using scientific analysis and devise new best practice conservation techniques.

Two photographers under supervision of the German Historical Institute in London are also based at TNA, who are painstakingly imaging each individual page of all 500,000 records. They work to not only to take pictures that make the text readable, but to convey the unique material condition of the collection.

The digital record is then transferred to the University of Oldenburg, where they are worked on by a team led by project director Prof. Dr Dagmar Freist and comprising four postdoctoral researchers, the project manager and the research and PR coordinator, the data manager and ten research student assistants. They populate the project's online database and create the vast quantity of metadata required to make the collection searchable at a document level. Oldenburg staff also develop academic collaborations and outreach to publicise the project, in collaboration with colleagues at TNA.

The team based in Göttingen consists of two IT experts from the head office of the VZG, who provide their IT expertise and are responsible for the technical development and implementation of the portal. Funding for the Prize Papers Project is allocated by the Göttingen Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Lower Saxony, Germany, as part of the Academies Programme of the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities. Thus, it is funded by the German state and the state of Lower Saxony, with staff time and resources from TNA. Its prospective funding period is from 2018 to 2037.

The funding body: <https://www.akademienunion.de/en/research/the-academies-programme>

## 5. Project Team



Prof. Dr Dagmar Freist

Project Director

Prize Papers Project

University of Oldenburg

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Dagmar Freist is professor of early modern history at the Carl von Ossietzky-University Oldenburg, Germany. She did her PhD at the University of Cambridge. Her publications focus on European expansion, colonialism, religious diversity, the early modern self, practice theory and global microhistory. Dagmar Freist has led or collaborated on numerous national and international interdisciplinary research projects with a high degree of knowledge transfer such as the the EU Horizon 2020 / HERA collaborative project "Intoxicating Spaces" (2019-2022). At present she leads the international digitisation and research project "Prize Papers" as director, which is funded by the Göttingen Academy of Science in Lower Saxony, 2018-2037 and the transdisciplinary research group "DiViAS – Digitisation, Visualisation, and Analysis of Archival and Museum Collections from colonial contexts" (funded by the VW Foundation, 2023-2026). She also holds various positions at management level, including Dean of the Faculty.



Dr Amanda Bevan

Head of Legal Records & the National Archives' Prize Papers team

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Amanda Bevan has worked as an archivist and curator at the National Archives since 1985. In that time, she has transformed the possibilities of researching early modern litigation on land, with the creation of over a million searchable descriptive entries in TNA's online catalogue. Since 2012, she has also been sorting and cataloguing maritime prize litigation, working with the Huygens Institute in 2017-18, and since 2018 as a partner in the Prize Papers Project, with her TNA colleagues Dr Randolph Cock and Dr Oliver Finnegan.



Dr Lucas Haasis

Research Coordinator | PR manager | Postdoc

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Lucas Haasis is postdoctoral researcher as well as the research coordinator and PR manager of the Anglo-German Prize Papers Project since 2018. He is also a lecturer in Early Modern History at the Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg, Germany, since 2014. His research focuses on letter-writing practices and the mercantile culture of the 18th century, Atlantic and maritime history, materiality studies as well as microhistory. His book *The Power of Persuasion. Becoming a Merchant in the 18th century* based on a letter archive found among the Prize Papers was published in 2021 and received international recognition. The book was recently selected for open access publication under the European Open Science Cloud by the European Union.



Dr Oliver Finnegan

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Oliver Finnegan is a historian who joined the Prize Papers Project in 2018 after completing a PhD at the University of Cambridge. His research concerns the history of early modern piracy, the practice and theory of colonialism, maritime exchange and religious networks. He is currently writing a trade book on the global history of piracy c.1500–c.1800, under contract with a major publisher. His role within the Prize Papers project is to survey and catalogue the collection as well running volunteer projects and overseeing digitisation processes. He is also responsible for developing academic collaborations, along with UK and international outreach for the Prize Papers, in partnership with the Oldenburg team.



## 6. Transcriptions of Selected Spanish Letters from the Prize Papers

**A letter from Joaquín Ruiz de España at Veracruz, Mexico to Antonio and Luís de Valderrama at Sanlúcar de Barrameda, 17 August 1747. From the ship Agata Galera, a register ship trading from Veracruz to Cadiz, ref HCA 32/94/17, SP6.**

### Transcription

Muy señores míos y mis más queridos y estimados amigos, no puede dejar mi verdadero cariño de cumplir con la obligación que me asiste, alegrándome que disfruten vms la más perfecta salud que yo para mí deseo en compañía del señor don Luis, mi señora Tía y Getruidita, ofreciendo la mía que por ahora a Dios gracias es buena para lo que vms me quisieran mandar, que como amigos y queridos de corazón lo ejecutaré con fina voluntad.

Amigos míos, ya por las cartas que escribí en la Habana a mi señora doña Pantaleona y a vms. habrán sabido de mi arribo a este puerto, que fue el día 26 del pasado mes de mayo, en donde me tienen vms. a pie firme y con verdadera cariñosa amistad esperando ocasiones en que vms. me manden, pues no deseo otra cosa que el lograrlas yo en que experimenten mi buen deseo de servirles.

Amigos míos, pongo en noticia de vms. como en la Habana la víspera de la noche antes de mi salida de la Habana, habiendo ido a embarcarme a las diez de la noche con mi padre, al tiempo de subir la escala del navío se me fueron los pies y las manos con la oscuridad de la noche, caí al agua manteniéndome sobre ella más por obra de Dios que por mi habilidad, pues no ignoran vms. no sé nadar, y viéndome mi padre en este tan grande conflicto usó todas las diligencias más prontas que requería el lance en que yo me veía, y echándome un cabo mi padre quiso Dios, la Virgen, señor San Antonio y el señor San José el que agarrara el cabo, y que no sé cómo lo agarré pues ya me faltaba el aliento y sentido, pues si se tarda un creo más mi socorro sin duda ninguna me hubiera ahogado, pero mediante Dios y algunas buenas almas [armas] como las de vms que ruegan por mí escapé de este naufragio, y así amigos míos no me olviden de rezar todas las noches una salve en el rosario, que aun puede ser que mediante las oraciones de vms me librasen la vida en esta ocasión que me vi bastante y a los pies de la muerte, y siendo yo tan gran pecador la hubiera tenido según mis culpas Dios, por quienes le pido a SDM tenga misericordia de mi y me de un grandísimo dolor y enmienda para que yo jamás le ofenda y ruego y pudo que la vida de vms. acompañada con las de sus padres muchos y dilatados años.

(Al margen) Encomiéndenme vms con mis memorias a todos los p.es de la comp.a presentes y ausentes y al señor don Nicolás Rendón no olvidándome con la misma expresión de mi señora Doña Luisa Carballo.

Veracruz Agosto 17 1747

Thursday 23 November 2023

**Translation:**

My lords and dearest friends, my true devotion compels me to fulfill my obligations to you and to hope this letter will find you in such perfect health as I would wish for myself and in the company of Señor Don Luis, my honorable aunt and Getrudita. I offer my own health, which is good at the moment, for anything you, my beloved friends, would ask of me. I will be happy to oblige.

Dear friends, the letters I sent from Havana to you and the lady Doña Pantaleona, must have informed you of my arrival to this port on the 26th of May, where you will still find me, waiting steadfastly and with devoted friendship for anything you would request of me, as my only desire is to find occasions to serve you.

My friends, I hereby inform you that on the eve of my departure from Havana, as I was climbing the ship's ladder at ten in the evening, my feet and hands slipped in the darkness of the night and I fell into the water. I managed to stay afloat more due to the mercy of God than my own skill, for I know not how to swim, as you are well aware. My father, seeing me in such a dire predicament, swiftly and diligently threw me a rope. God, the Holy Virgin, Saint Joseph and Saint Anthony must have willed that I held on, for I was already gasping for air and about to lose consciousness. But, thanks be to God and the prayers of some merciful souls such as yourselves, I escaped with my life. Thus, my beloved friends, do not forget to say one Hail Mary on my behalf in your daily rosary, as it may very well be that my life was spared only through your prayers. I saw myself at the feet of death and thought that, being such a sinner, God would surely take my life. I beg the Almighty in your name to have mercy on me and send me great pain so that I learn never to offend Him. I beg and pray that He will keep your life for many long years in the company of your parents.

(Written in the margin) My best regards to all the p.es de la comp.a both present and absent, Señor Don Nicolás Rendón and especially the lady Doña Luisa Carballo.

Veracruz, August 17th, 1747

**Comment:**

Joaquín Ruiz de España was a 16 year old boy from Sanlúcar de Barrameda who migrated to Veracruz with his father, Juan Ruiz de España. They remained there for four years; Juan worked as a "factor" (commercial agent) and his son assisted him as clerk and secretary. They migrated legally (their passenger license is at the Archivo de Indias in Seville; a digitized copy is also available:

<http://pares.mcu.es:80/ParesBusquedas20/catalogo/description/160272>. This letter is addressed to two friends of Joaquín, Antonio and Luís de Valderrama (children of Luís de Valderrama, secretary of the municipality of Sanlúcar de Barrameda). He also sent a letter with similar text to two other friends.

**A letter from Francisca Muñoz at Seville to Miguel Atocha, 22 January 1747. From La Ninfa, a register ship in trading between Cadiz and Vera Cruz, Mexico, ref: HCA 32/134/7, no.29.**

**Transcription:**

Esposo y querido mío

Celebraré que estas cartas lleguen a tus manos y te halle con la perfecta salud que yo para mí deseo, la que me asiste ya puedes considerar la de tus hijos todos buenos =

Quisiera sabe qual es el motivo de haberte escrito treze cartas sin estas y de ninguna a ver tenido respuesta, quisiera saber si allá no ay papel o plumas o tinta para siquiera a ver escrito una, ya veo que es por falta no de lo dicho, ni de lugar, sino de mucho olvido que ya has hecho de toda tu familia, pues todos por acá tienen sus socorros, razón y sola yo soy la desgraciada, rodeada de tantas miserias qual no otro en este mundo, con más arrastes, y colmo de miserias el verme rodeada de estos dos pedazos que tanto tu te has apagado en el amor, pues tu hijo Miguel está hecho un hombre con más cuerpo que tú y también está en cueros, pues por acá no hay por donde trabajar ni ganar un ochavo, yo con mis muchas enfermedades tampoco puedo hacer cosa alguna, pues desde que saliste de esta tierra no he gozado de salud pues por diferentes veces he estado yo para irme a mi Camino y con más fuerza tres años a esta parte que estoy con una apostema en la garganta que ya puedes considerar y iendo y biniendo a un hospital y allá me dan las unciones para ponerme, y para las sangrías es menester buscar de limosna o que se ha de dar al Zirujano, Comer estoy aterida al que me quiere por Dios dar un bocado, pues ay días que no pruebo ni aun agua porque no tengo de donde sacarlo y verme tanto tiempo enferma sin poder salir aunque fuera a pedirlo de puerta en puerta =

Ya si por Dios y la Virgen Santísima de la Encarnación te duelas de nosotros pues para ver a Dios es menester buscar una mano y una saya, y tu hijo quien le preste una capa para salir a Misa, y sobre esto puedes hechar las quantas, y luego que yo no puedo superarlo que como he dicho esta hecho un hombre y sin miedo de Padre haze lo que quiere, y sobre todo da providencia de el que yo como dize el Medico y Zirujano serán muy pocos mis días, tu Compadre Mena desde que murió su mujer se fundio, pues anda por la calle con una muleta pidiendo limisna y no te digo mas. De tu hija Maria estaba sirviendo que hasta eso que me aliviaba en alguna cosa también me lo quito Dios pues a poco tiempo de a ver estado en la Casa me mando el medico que la sacara porque no era para servir porque havia de enfermar como asi fue, haviendola traído a casa y puestose buena llegó a mi el Hijo de Estacio Hidalgo el playero y me dixo tenia hecho días havia concepto de casarse con ella que que respondia, a lo que le dixes tu estavas ausente y no podía yo disponer cosa alguna a lo que me dixo que ya ello savia

mas viendo la mucha necesidad y que pasaba y no ser para ello aunque no lleva ningunos mayorazgos pero no obstante no falta, Dios a nadie y discurro que su padre de su merced no lo llevara a mal pues viendo estas razones y viéndola a ella en cueros, y ser el tal un mozo tan bien querido de todo el mundo, sin vicio, pues no bebe vino ni juega a naypes ni compañías lo acepte y se dispuso todo aunque no con todo el gusto cumplido pues faltabas tu pues el mismo lo decía, están en su casa solos tan querida de el que eso es no mas de para verlo, de su Padre Madre hermana y hermano de su parte no digo nada pues eso son desatinos el está de ayudarte en la escuela de la Calle Larga, aguardando que aya coyuntura para quedarse con la escuela por ser el maestro de Mucha edad pario un Niño que fue el asombro de toda Triana y Sevilla vivió catorze meses y se murió día de Nuestra Señora del Rosario del año 1706 (1746?). Te envían ambos muchas memorias que desean verte y ya que no puede ser prompto desde allá les echas la Bendición para que Dios les de buen suceso las reziviras de tu hijo Miguel y mias a medida de tu deseo

Sevilla y Enero 22 de 1747

Tu esposa que mas te estima y ver desea, Francisca Muñoz

**Translation:**

My dear beloved husband

I will celebrate that this letter has reach your hands and finds you with the perfect health that I wish for myself, mine you can guess, your children are all well.

I would like to know the reason why I did not receive any response to the thirteen letters I sent to you; I would like to know if perhaps over there is no paper or pen or ink not to have written even a letter; but I see that it is not for lack not of the abovesaid [letter writing material], but because of you forgiving all of your family. Everyone around here has their relief, and only I am miserable, surrounded by more miseries than anybody else in the world, with so many pains, and moreover surrounded by these two [children of yours] for whom your love has extinguished, because your son Miguel has become a man with a larger body than yours, and he is also naked, because over here there is no work or possibilities to earn anything. Me, with my many illnesses, couldn't do much, because since you left this land I haven't enjoyed good health and several times I have been to go my way [meaning that she was about to die] and since three years ago I have had an abscess in my throat, and I have been coming and going to the hospital, and there they only give me the unctions, and for the bloodletting it is precise to beg to be able to pay the surgeon; I am stiff and starving, there are days in which I don't even taste water because I have no place here to take it from, and I am so ill that I cannot even go out to beg door to door.

Now if for God and the Most Holy Virgin of the Incarnation you grieve for us, because to see God it is necessary to look for a hand and a sackcloth, and your son needs someone who will lend him a cloak to go out to Mass, and on this you can do the accounts [make the calculations], and then that I can't overcome him [as in: dominate him, make him behave] because as I have said, he has become a man, and without fear of his father, he does whatever he wants, and above all, keep in mind that, as the Doctor and Surgeon says, I won't live much longer. Your friend ("compadre") Mena is very weak since his wife died, and he walks the streets with a crutch begging for alms, and I won't tell you more. Your daughter María was serving [working as a domestic servant], which gave me some relief, but God took even that away from me, because shortly after she started working in the house, the doctor recommended me to take her out, because she could get ill, as it happened. I brought her home and when she was better, the son of Estacio Hidalgo "el playero" [the "beach man"] came to me and told me that he wanted to marry her, to which I answered that you were gone and I couldn't arrange anything; to this he said that he was aware, but seeing how much in need we were, and not looking for a dowry, and I inferred that her father [as in, Miguel Atocha,] wouldn't object, because in light of these reasons, and seeing Maria naked [a figure of speech to convey poverty] and him being a lad so beloved by everyone, without vice, that doesn't drink or play cards or have bad company; and so everything was arranged, however not with full satisfaction, since you were missing. Now they are alone in their home, she so beloved by him that is worth seeing; and I won't say anything about their father, mother and brother. He is a helper in the school of the Long Street (Calle Larga), waiting for the occasion to take over the school, because the headmaster is very old. She gave birth to a baby that was the marvel of all Triana and Sevilla, he lived fourteen months and died on the day of Our Lady of the Rosary of the year 1746. They send you their regards, they want to see you, and since this cannot happen soon, they hope you will give them your blessing so God gives them good success, you will also receive them [the regards and greetings] from your son Miguel, and mine to the extent of your wishes [inferring that she does not send good wishes]

Sevilla, 22 January 1747

Your wife that wants to see you, Francisca Muñoz

## 7. Project Partners

The National Archives is a non-ministerial department, and the official archive and publisher for the UK Government, and for England and Wales. They are the guardians of over 1,000 years of iconic national documents. They are expert advisers in information and records management and are a cultural, academic and heritage institution. The National Archives fulfil a leadership role for the archive sector and work to secure the future of physical and digital records. <https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/about/our-role>

The Carl von Ossietzky University of Oldenburg was founded in 1973, making it one of Germany's young universities. Its goal is to find answers to the major challenges society faces in the 21st century – through interdisciplinary, cutting-edge research. <https://uol.de/en/outline>

The Gemeinsamer Bibliotheksverbund (GBV) is the common library network of the seven German federal states Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt, Schleswig-Holstein, Thuringia and the Foundation of Prussian Cultural Heritage. The GBV head office (VZG) is situated in Göttingen. [https://www.gbv.de/Verbundzentrale/ueber die VZG/index](https://www.gbv.de/Verbundzentrale/ueber_die_VZG/index)

The German Historical Institute London (GHIL) is dedicated to the promotion of historical research in the United Kingdom and Germany. It focuses on the comparative history of Britain and Germany, the global and colonial history of the British Empire and Commonwealth, and the history of British-German relations and transfers. <https://www.ghil.ac.uk/home/mission-statement>

**8. Further details etc**

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