

Dutch Prize Papers



HCA 32 / 1845.1: A box with ship's documents, court papers, ship's journals, cash books and a wallet with a small French prayer book, seized in the 17th century during the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars. Source: Sailing Letters Journal IV, Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2011, 12; picture: Erik van der Doe

The Prize Papers are documents seized by British navy and privateers from enemy ships in the period 1652-1815. These papers are kept in the archive of the High Court of Admiralty in The National Archives in Kew (London). Approximately a quarter of the Prize Papers originates from Dutch ships. Apart from ship's journals, lists of cargo, accounts, plantation lists and interrogations of crew members, this collection also contains approximately 38,000 business and private letters. The letters originate from all social strata of society and most of them never reached their intended destination.

Research

The huge variety of the Prize Papers makes it suitable for different types of research. It means that the Prize Papers can be used for a wide range of research topics, for example, for developments in language and dialect, trade, material culture, social relationships and knowledge transfer from the 17th to the 19th centuries. A large international research project by the universities of Oxford and

Birmingham led by Jelle van Lottum focused on the migration of sailors and the distribution of human capital, based on records of interrogations of crew members. This [research](#) was financed by the Economic and Social Research Council (2011-2016).

The Sailing Letters' project carried out by the National Library of the Netherlands in 2004, introduced the Prize Papers to a broad group of Dutch researchers. Five *Sailing Letters Journals* were published between 2008 and 2013 to make this rich and versatile resource even more widely known.

Preservation and digitisation

The award at the end of 2015 of a substantial subsidy to Huygens ING by *Metamorfoze*, the national programme for the preservation of paper heritage, made it possible to preserve and digitise 144.000 pages of selected documents.

Go to: <https://www.huygens.knaw.nl/dutch-prize-papers/>

or: <https://prizepapers.huygens.knaw.nl/>