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Prize Papers – German Historical Institute London part of 20-year research on unique archival sources

An opening ceremony for the project on the “Prize Papers” awarded to the University of Oldenburg will take place in Oldenburg tonight. This is a project that aims to catalogue, digitise and publish the exceptional collection of “prize papers” held at the National Archives in Kew in a modern online edition. The project was conceived by Dagmar Freist, Professor for Early Modern History at the University of Oldenburg and former research fellow at the German Historical Institute, and is set up as a collaborative enterprise with a core research group in Oldenburg and partners at the National Archives in Kew and the German Historical Institute London. Its aim is to make tens of thousands of previously unopened letters as well as ship and court papers available to scholars and the public that were captured together with enemy ships by the British Navy during wartimes in the years between 1664 and 1817. The roughly 4000 boxes of uncatalogued material contain correspondence, journals and notes of a private nature as well as official shipping registers, crew lists and ship`s logs. The material was presented before the High Court of Admiralty after capture, after which it went into the archive and has since escaped systematic attention.

Work on the project has started in January 2018 and is set to last for twenty years. It is funded by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities which is the umbrella organisation of eight German academies of sciences and humanities. The project is attached to the Academy of Sciences and Humanities in Göttingen. The sum awarded to the project headed by Professor Freist is 9.7 million Euros.

The German Historical Institute London (GHIL) promotes independent research on British history, the history of the Empire and Commonwealth, and Anglo-German relations. It also plays an important part in presenting new research on German history in Britain through its public lectures and by hosting exhibitions. It facilitates communication between German and British historians through its publications, research grants and its programme of conferences and workshops. Its public library specializes in German history. The institute is part of the Max Weber Foundation - German Humanities Institutes Abroad

Contact
Hannes Ziegler, German Historical Institute London, Press and Public Relations,
ziegler@ghil.ac.uk , 020 7309 2029.

www.ghil.ac.uk