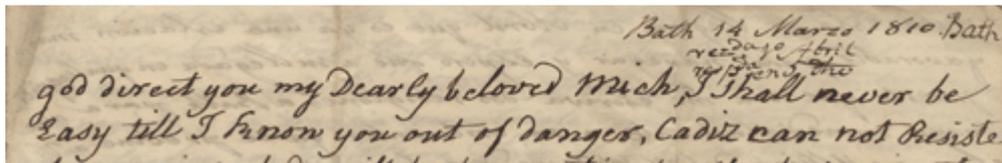

People in the Langton Letters

The Langton family

A family of wealthy merchants in Cadiz, Spain. Nicolás Langton (c.1705-1779), who was born into a landed family in Kilkenny, Ireland, moved to Cadiz in Spain in 1724. Here (unlike in Ireland at the time) he was free to practise his Catholic faith, and he prospered as a merchant, joining a number of other Irish families who had made their homes and ran their businesses in the city. Nicolás became a naturalized Spanish subject in 1762, and in 1769 was registered as a nobleman of the province of Granada - thus gaining rights and dispensations which enabled him to conduct his business affairs more freely and profitably.

Miguel Langton (1737-1810): son of Nicolás. In 1809, Miguel stayed in Cadiz when the rest of his family moved to Bath. However, before he could join them, in July 1810 he died in Cadiz.



The first few lines of a letter written by Maria Langton to her husband (Ref. 0770/1/1)

Maria Langton née Dillon (died 1821): born in Dublin. Second wife of Miguel (his first wife died young and the marriage produced no surviving heirs). Maria came to Bath in 1809.

Miguel Theobald Langton (1782-1844): only son of Miguel and Maria. Came to England in 1809, partly to look after his mother and other members of the family, and partly with a 'secret' commission, which seems to have involved sourcing gunpowder for the Spanish army.

Carmen Aranza (born 1773): daughter of Miguel and Maria, married to the Blas de Aranza, a Spanish nobleman who supported the French. Carmen and her six children/stepchildren, came to Bath with her mother in 1809, but later travelled to France and then Spain to join her husband. Because of her husband's support for the French, her share of her father's estate was threatened with confiscation.

Fanny (Francisca Cristina) Gabet (born 1767): daughter of Miguel and Maria, married to Jean Claud Gabet, a French nobleman. Lived in France. Like Carmen, because of her husband, her share of her father's estate was threatened with confiscation.

Kitty (Maria Cristina) Andilla (born 1771): daughter of Miguel and Maria, married to the Baron de Andilla. Lived in Valencia.

Fanny Brun (1796-1866): granddaughter of Miguel and Maria - daughter of their daughter Josefa Teresa, who married Jose Brun, but died in giving birth to Fanny. Jose Brun subsequently remarried. Fanny may have been brought up by her grandparents, and she came to Bath with her grandmother in 1809.

Extended Langton Family

Agustín Butler: signs letters as 'cousin and friend' of Miguel Theobald, but it has not been possible to discover how he fits into the extensive Langton family tree. Appears to be a close business associate of Miguel Langton, and also named by him as one of the executors of his will. Lived in Cadiz.

Edward Murphy: first cousin of Miguel Theobald Langton (son of Edward Murphy and one of the sisters of Miguel Langton)

Aunt Pepa – possibly Josefa, sister of Miguel

Other People

A very large number of people are mentioned in the letters, some frequently. These are just a very few:

Nelly Kelly, Mrs Catalina Barron: it has not been possible to discover their relationships to the Langtons

Zerezuela: seems to have been bookkeeper for Miguel Langton. Lived in Cadiz, but talks about coming to England.

Apodaca: Spanish ambassador to London for part of the period covered by the letters

Henry Wellesley: Younger brother of the Duke of Wellington. English ambassador to Spain from 1810.

Thomas Barnabe Murphy: administrator of the Poor House in Waterford, Ireland, a charitable institution for women for which the Langton family were responsible

Places in the Langton Letters

Bath, in the early nineteenth century still a fashionable resort for the wealthy, became home to a number of refugees from French revolution and the wars that followed. It had a strong Catholic community, a factor which would have been of importance to the Langton family who were devout Catholics. The Langtons took lodgings first in Westgate Street, then moved to better lodgings at 3 Henry Street, and finally moved in 1813 to 14 South Parade, a house which Miguel Theobald bought.



A view of South Parade, Bath, by John Claude Nattes, 1804. The house nearest the river is number 14, where the Langtons lived. (Victoria Art Gallery, Bath and North East Somerset Council)

Cadiz, the home of the Langton family from the early eighteenth century, was a wealthy and powerful centre of commerce and trade with the Spanish colonies in South America. During the Peninsular War (1808-1814), the city remained free of French control. It was besieged by the French from 5 February 1810 until 24 August 1812, but it could be provisioned from the sea, where British naval power ensured that ships could for the most part pass freely.



A photograph of the house in Cadiz in which the Langton family used to live. The property is now occupied by a Regional Government department. (Photograph copyright Bath Record Office)

Waterford, Ireland, was the location of the 'Poor House', a charitable institution for poor widows and single women which was founded by Laurence Carew (Lorenzo Careu), the grandfather of Miguel Langton. Responsibility for funding and administering the Poor House lay with the Langton family

Events in the Langton Letters – the Peninsular War

The Langton family correspondence was written at the time of the Peninsular War - a war which seriously affected the family.

The French, having conquered much of the rest of Europe, invaded Portugal in 1807 and Spain 1808. For the next five years Spain and Portugal were the scene of a savage and complex war, which saw the abdication of the Spanish King and his replacement by Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, the rise of groups of local 'guerillas', and an alliance with the British which provided both financial support for Spain and Portugal and armed forces which were for much of the time under the command of the Duke of Wellington. At one stage, the French were in control of most of Spain, but by the end of 1813 they had been forced to retreat across the Pyrenees. The war cost the lives of half a million people and caused untold suffering on all sides.

Many of the letters contain references to events in the war. Two events of particular significance to the family were:

Siege of Cadiz - 5 February 1810 until 24 August 1812, when it was lifted

Siege of Valencia - 28 December 1811 until 9 January 1812, when it fell to the French.

More information on the war, and a list of relevant books, can be found on the [Peninsular War 200 website](#).

Explanation of some of the terms used in the letters

Miguel Langton and his son Miguel Theobald seem to have been equally at home writing in English, Spanish and French. Miguel's wife writes only in English, as does Agustín Butler. Carmen Aranza writes in French or Spanish, while Fanny Brun writes in Spanish, although from later evidence it is clear that she is also fluent in English.

Even when writing in English, Miguel Theobald Langton and Agustín Butler use some Spanish words, usually when referring to legal or accounting matters. The most important of these are:

albacea: executor

testamentaria: estate or inheritance (of a will)

hipotecada: mortgaged (of a house)

gastos: expenses

dote: dowry

libro mayor: one of the accounting ledgers

Other unfamiliar terms used in the letters:

Packet: a packet boat, used to transport mail (and some passengers). In England, Falmouth was the main packet boat port at the time these letters were written.

M of W: Man of War - ship of the Royal Navy