

A Nation of Petitioners

Between 1780 and 1918, over one million petitions from across the four nations were sent to the House of Commons. *A Nation of Petitioners* is the first study of this nineteenth-century heyday of petitioning in the United Kingdom. It explores how ordinary men and women engaged with politics in an era of democratisation, but not democracy, and restores their voices and actions to the story of UK political culture. Drawing on more than a million petitions, as well as archives of leading politicians, institutions, and pressure groups, Henry J. Miller demonstrates the centrality of petitions and petitioning to mass campaigning, representation, collective action, and forging collective identities at the local and national level. From the early nineteenth century, the massive growth of petitions underpinned and reshaped the popular authority of the UK state, including Parliament, the monarchy, and government. Challenging accounts that have stressed disciplinary or exclusionary processes in the evolution of popular politics, *A Nation of Petitioners* conclusively establishes the importance of the mass participation of ordinary people through petitions.

Henry J. Miller is Associate Professor (Research) at Durham University. He has published widely on the political culture of modern Britain, and led projects on petitions funded by the AHRC and Leverhulme Trust. His first book, *Politics Personified: Portraiture, Caricature, and Visual Culture in Britain, 1830–1880*, was published in 2015 by Manchester University Press. He is co-editor of *Petitions and Petitioning in Europe and North America: From the Late Medieval Period to the Present*, which will be published by Oxford University Press for the British Academy.

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A Nation of Petitioners

*Petitions and Petitioning in the
United Kingdom, 1780–1918*

Henry J. Miller

Durham University



Cambridge University Press & Assessment
978-1-009-05452-2 — A Nation of Petitioners
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www.cambridge.org
Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9781009054522

DOI: 10.1017/9781009053631

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First published 2023

First paperback edition 2025

A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-316-51170-1 Hardback

ISBN 978-1-009-05452-2 Paperback

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For my parents

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Acknowledgements

This book began when I first glimpsed the dusty, forgotten volumes of the Select Committee on Public Petitions in the Institute of Historical Research over a decade ago. Since then, I have been lucky enough to be generously supported by Leverhulme Trust (RPG-2016-097), the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) (AH/R008868/1), and smaller grants from the history division, University of Manchester. I would like to acknowledge the research assistance of Luke Heselwood, Peter Jones, who helped with data inputting, and Harry Cross, for his assistance in cleaning up the data; in the last case, this was supported by a grant from the Department of History, Durham University.

I would like to thank all those who commented on portions of the manuscript or the original book proposal: Daniel Carpenter, Diego Palacios Cerezales, the late Angus Hawkins, Maartje Janse, Emily Jones, Stuart Jones, Mark Knights, Philip Loft, Mary O'Connor, Joris Oddens, Gordon Pentland, Matthew Roberts, Robert Saunders, Tom Scriven, Paul Seaward, Miles Taylor, David Thackeray, Brodie Waddell, Philip Williamson, and David Zaret. I am particularly grateful to David Craig, Richard Huzzey, Christian Liddy, Naomi Lloyd-Jones, Kathryn Rix, Philip Salmon, Justin Willis, and Andy Wood for their considered criticism and reflections upon the entire manuscript. With Richard, my collaborator on three projects on petitions, I have discussed the subject matter of this book at great length, often over lunch at Lebeneat in Durham. I hope these intellectual exchanges have been as useful for him as they have been for me.

My mentors at Durham, Ludmilla Jordanova and Christian Liddy, have been sympathetic and valuable sources of advice during the writing of this book. For many years, Malcolm Chase was an unofficial mentor to me and was always encouraging. Malcolm took a keen interest in petitions, and I am sorry he is not here to read the finished work, especially as it has been influenced by his sympathetic, undogmatic approach to recovering the lives of ordinary people.

xii Acknowledgements

My research has benefited from the kind assistance of librarians and archivists at Bolton Archives; the British Library manuscripts room; Carlisle Archive Centre; Palace Green Library, Durham University; Durham County Record Office; the Institute of Historical Research; Keele University Library; Lancashire Archives; Liverpool Record Office; John Rylands University Library of Manchester; Manchester Central Library; The Women's Library at the London School of Economics and Political Science; The National Archives; Northumberland Archives; Nottingham University Library; Oldham Local Studies and Archives; the Parliamentary Archives; the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland; Sheffield City Archives; Staffordshire Record Office; West Sussex Record Office; West Yorkshire Archive Service at Bradford and Kirklees; and the Working-Class Movement Library, Salford.

As I hope is clear from the text, I have learnt a lot from other scholars working on petitions, whether through conversations, email correspondence, hearing papers, or reading draft work, including, but not limited to, Benoît Agnès, Martin Almbjör, Yuval Ben-Bassat, Maggie Blackhawk, Catherine Bochel, Jean-Gabriel Contamin, Gwilym Dodd, Lara Douds, Aaron Graham, Marta Gravela, Peter Hill, Julian Hoppit, Joanna Innes, Robert Jones, Cristina Leston-Bandeira, Carrie Long, Ismini Pells, Ciara Stewart, Laura Stewart, Hannah Weiss Muller, Amanda Whiting, Hannah Worthen, Andreas Würigler, and Tim Verhoeven.

At the Press, I would like to thank Liz Friend-Smith, and the two anonymous reviewers, for seeing the potential in the book, and Lisa Carter for managing the production process. I am grateful to Castle Howard Estate Ltd for permission to reproduce material from Lord Morpeth's diary, to Bolton Council for permission to reproduce Figure 0.1, and to the Parliamentary Archives for permission to reproduce Figure 5.1. I would like to thank Wiley-Blackwell and the editors for permission to reuse material originally published in 'The Politics of Petitioning: Parliament, Government, and Subscriptional Cultures, 1780–1918', *History*, 106 (2021), 221–43; and Oxford University Press and the editors for permission to reuse material originally published in 'Petitions, Parliament, and Political Culture: Petitioning the House of Commons, 1780–1918', *Past & Present*, 248 (2020), 123–64. I am grateful to Richard, with whom I co-authored these articles, for agreeing to the reuse of material from them in this book.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank my family for their love and support during the writing of this book, particularly my wife Caroline, and our children, Toby and Clara, who have become increasingly skilled at petitioning parental authority. Much of this book was written during a time when I was unable to see my parents as much as I would have liked, but they were seldom far from my thoughts. This book is for them.

Abbreviations

<i>ABTC</i>	<i>Anti-Bread Tax Circular</i>
<i>ACLL</i>	Anti-Corn Law League
Archives+, MCL	Archives+, Manchester Central Library
BL Add. MS.	British Library Additional Manuscripts
CA	Catholic Association
CD Acts	Contagious Diseases Acts
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i>
<i>EHR</i>	<i>English Historical Review</i>
<i>Hansard</i>	<i>Hansard's Parliamentary Debates</i>
<i>HJ</i>	<i>Historical Journal</i>
<i>HR</i>	<i>Historical Research</i>
<i>IRSH</i>	<i>International Review of Social History</i>
<i>JBS</i>	<i>Journal of British Studies</i>
<i>JMH</i>	<i>Journal of Modern History</i>
JRULM	John Rylands University Library of Manchester
<i>LJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Lords</i>
LNA	Ladies' National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts
<i>MG</i>	<i>Manchester Guardian</i>
NCL	Northern Counties' Electoral League for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts
NSWS	National Society for Women's Suffrage
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
PA	Parliamentary Archives
<i>PER</i>	<i>Parliaments, Estates, and Representation</i>
<i>PH</i>	<i>Parliamentary History</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
<i>P&P</i>	<i>Past & Present</i>
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
SCA	Sheffield City Archives
SCPP	Select Committee on Public Petitions
SSH	<i>Social Science History</i>

xiv List of Abbreviations

Staffs. RO	Staffordshire Record Office
TCA	Test and Corporation Acts
TWL, LSE	The Women’s Library, London School of Economics
UKA	United Kingdom Alliance
<i>WSJ</i>	<i>Women’s Suffrage Journal</i>
WSPU	Women’s Social and Political Union
WYAS	West Yorkshire Archive Service