

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



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Shaftesbury Road, Cambridge CB2 8EA, United Kingdom
One Liberty Plaza, 20th Floor, New York, NY 10006, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia
314–321, 3rd Floor, Plot 3, Splendor Forum, Jasola District Centre,
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For my parents

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Abbreviations

<i>ABTC</i>	<i>Anti-Bread Tax Circular</i>
ACLL	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>
HR	Historical Research
<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