

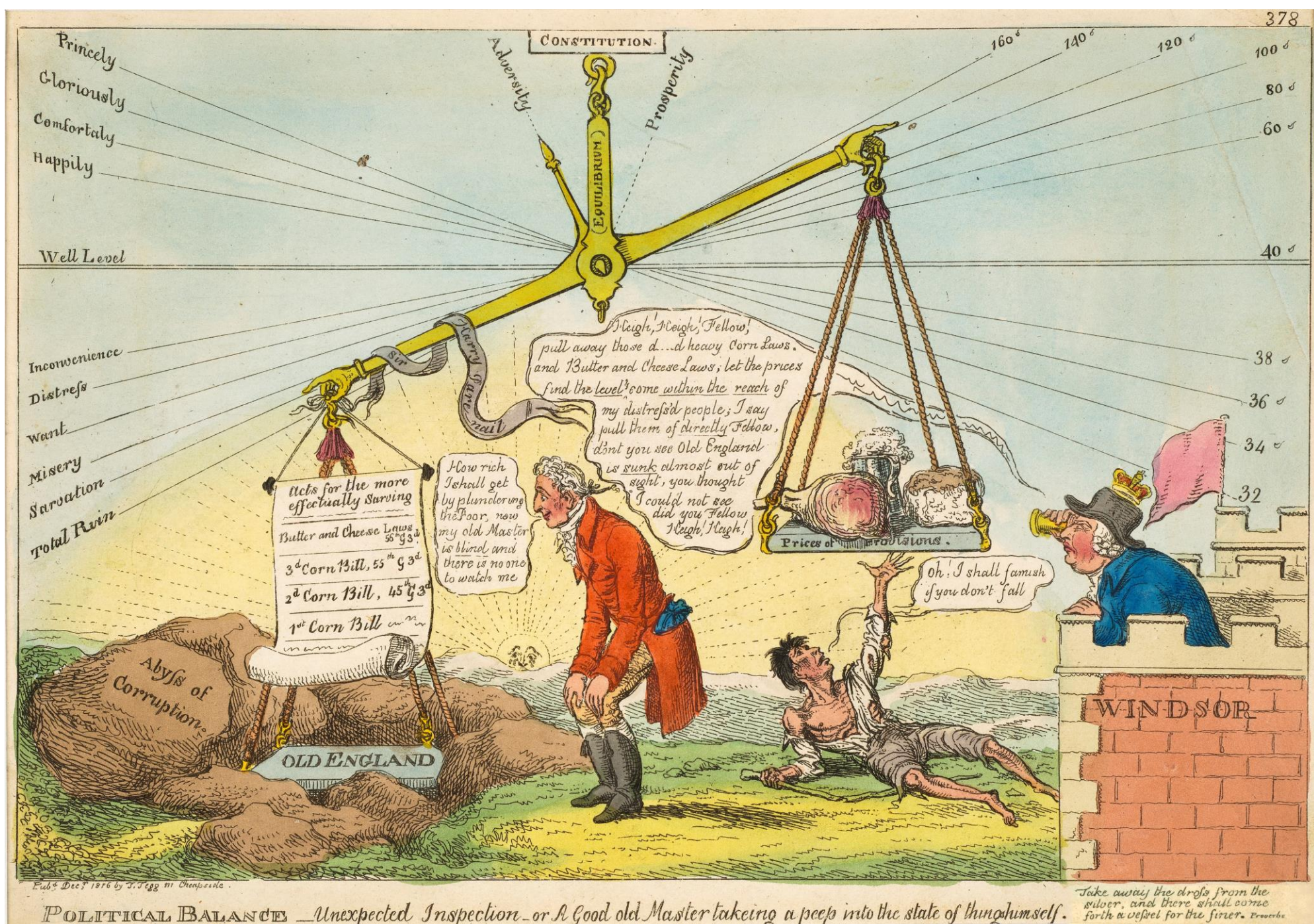
## The Corn Laws

After the end of the Napoleonic Wars it was feared that cheap foreign grain would flood the British market and that domestic producers would suffer financially. The first of the Corn Laws was introduced by the British Government in 1815 to protect domestic landowners and farmers from this threat. The high tariffs imposed made it too expensive to import grain, even when domestic supplies were in short supply. The price of bread increased and rioting was not uncommon. Eventually, despite strong opposition from his own party, Conservative Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel successfully repealed the law in 1846.

On display here is a selection of documents relating to the Corn Laws, including a political cartoon and election broadsheets (the topic featured prominently in election campaigns). The Anti-Corn Law League, a political movement set up in 1836, fought to abolish the Corn Laws and produced the innovative free-trade sticker seen here on an envelope dating from 1842.

All the documents presented here are held by the University of Nottingham at Manuscripts and Special Collections. The University collects archival material relating to the history of the University itself and its predecessor bodies, including the Midland Agricultural and Dairy College, the history of the East Midlands, and the research interests of the University. Over three million items are stored at Kings Meadow Campus. For more information on any of the items in the display or to arrange a visit to the Reading Room at Kings Meadow Campus visit [www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss](http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/mss) or email [mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk](mailto:mss-library@nottingham.ac.uk)





## Cartoon entitled 'Political Balance', December 1816

The Fagan Collection of Political Prints and Caricatures, Pol P 25

This political cartoon depicts the 'Constitution' as an ill-balanced set of scales with the prices of basic foodstuffs rising on one side (well out of reach of the starving working man) and the 'coffin' bearing 'Old England' (weighed down by the Corn Bills) disappearing into the 'abyss of corruption' on the other. A member of the aristocracy looks on, pleased at the thought of the profits to be gleaned, whilst the King watches through a spyglass from Windsor. Published by T. Tegg, Cheapside.



Bg 192

The movement now in progress to erect a statue to George Macdonald at Huntly, the town in which he was born when George IV. was King, recalls (says the "St. James's Gazette") an incident which many old inhabitants of Huntly will vividly remember. George Macdonald's father, a Huntly man, was a successful merchant, and did an extensive business in oatmeal. His business was flourishing at the time of the Corn Laws agitation, and in some way the people got the idea into their heads that the millers were storing up corn for sale at famine prices. They decided to mark their disgust and contempt by burning the father of George Macdonald in effigy, and they were about to set a light to the figure when the good man himself came along, hopping on his wooden leg. Stopping to look at the figure, he said quietly, "Yes, boys, it's not at all bad; but it's a great pity you've made the wooden leg the wrong one!" The effigy, we are told, was not burned after all; it may be to this day in some lumber-room at Huntly.

Newspaper cutting relating to Corn Law unrest, c.1901

The Briggs Collection of Literary Papers and Correspondence from the Sutton family, Nottingham, Bg 192



TO THE  
**WORTHY & INDEPENDENT**  
**ELECTORS**  
OF THE  
**Town of Nottingham.**

**BROTHER BURGESSES,**

**Y**OU are again called upon to assert your Rights as Englishmen in the return of fit and proper Persons to represent you in Parliament; a heavy responsibility devolves upon you in making that choice; it is not the wrangling about Church and State that should guide your judgment, it is your own immediate welfare and protection from the cruel grasp of the death engendering **CORN BILL**; from Taxation too grievous to be borne, by a sinking degraded Country! look around you, my Fellow Countrymen, and say what has robbed you of your comforts, your daily bread, **THE CORN BILL!!** what is it that has annihilated your Trade and Manufactures? what is it that acts as a non-intercourse between England and the rest of the civilized World, and neutralizes Commerce? **THE CORN BILL!** what is it that causes you to be clothed in rags, and your families in wretchedness? **THE CORN BILL!** what is it that demoralizes the People and consigns thousands to the degradation of the **Workhouse or the Prison?** **THE CORN LAWS!!** what is it that causes parents to weep over their famishing children? **THE CORN LAWS!!** Englishmen, are not these things far worse than Negro Slavery? In the West Indies, a Slave or Negro has a price or value put upon him! from £50 to £200; but what is the value of the starving oppressed White Slaves of England? your own feelings can best tell.

Fellow Countrymen, the sainted cry of **NO POPERY, and NO SLAVERY**, is total delusion! it is to draw your attention from your own **IMMEDIATE WRONGS and OPPRESSIONS**, to perpetuate a System upon you, more to be dreaded than the Pestilence! and yet you are told by Mr. Wright that the **LANDED INTEREST** must be supported!! to whom I would say, **REDUCE YOUR ENORMOUS RENTALS! RESTORE THE COTTAGER AND OPPRESS THE PEOPLE NO LONGER!** the system cannot be endured much longer! make a merit of necessity 'ere too late, by the **RESTORATION OF THE PEOPLE TO THEIR JUST RIGHTS AND COMFORTS, BY THE TOTAL REPEAL OF THE CORN LAWS!**

Fellow Countrymen, **MR. BIRCH and LORD RANCLIFFE** have fully and unequivocally expressed their sentiments and abhorrence of all the measures which oppress our Common Country, and their willingness to Serve you to the utmost of their Power and Ability; therefore desert them not in the hour of need! give them your Honest and Unbought Votes, and the Victory will be Complete and Honourable.

Englishmen, forget not Mr. Wright's Motto, "**THAT THE LANDED INTEREST MUST BE SUPPORTED.**" **THE CORN BILL, THE BANE OF ENGLISH COMMERCE!!!**

" Britons be firm, nor let Corruption sly,  
" Twine round your hearts indessoluable chains,  
" Determined hold your Independence, for that  
" Once destroyed, unfounded freedom is a morning dream,  
" That flits aerial from the spreading eye.  
" Hail, Independence, hail! Heavens best gift  
" To that of life and an immortal soul,  
" The life of life! that to the banquet high  
" And sober meal gives taste; to the bowed roof  
" Fair dreamed repose, and to the cottage charms.

R. S. Maples, Printer.

**AN ELECTOR.**





**Envelope addressed to Jonathan Priestman, 1842**  
**Correspondence of Priscilla McLaren and Sir Henry Norman,**  
**N Mc 1/11**

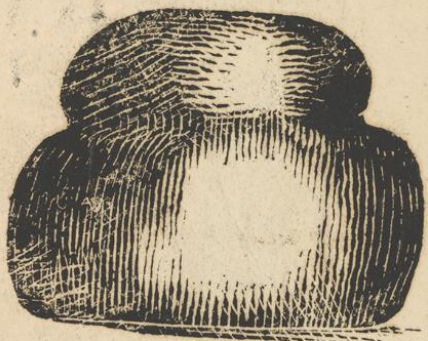
On the reverse of the envelope is an Anti-Corn Law sticker with the message "NO CORN LAWS WHY TAX THE POOR TO SUPPORT THE RICH".



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TO THE  
**ELECTORS**  
*Of NOTTINGHAM.*

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*The **SIZE** of the **LOAF**  
previous to the adoption  
of those measures which  
the Friends of the Blue  
Interest call "The good  
Old Cause."*



*The **SIZE** of the **LOAF**  
at the present time, and  
a **PROOF** of the **AD-  
VANTAGES** derived  
from "The **GOOD  
OLD CAUSE.**"*

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Thus, you have to consider which to choose,  
**DEAR BREAD** and the **BLUE INTEREST**, or  
**CHEAP BREAD** and the **CAUSE of INDEPEN-  
DENCE.**

**Mr. BIRCH** and **LORD RANCLIFFE** have **PLEDGED  
THEMSELVES** to support the **REPEAL** of the  
**CORN BILL**; **Mr. SMITH** will not give any Pledge.

JUNE 18th, 1818.

(J. DUNN, PRINTER.)





### **Portrait of Lord W. George F. Cavendish-Bentinck**

**Cassell's illustrated History of England (Cassell, Petter, and Galpin, 1863), revised edition, Vol. VII barcode 600197296**

Lord George Bentinck (1802-1848), third son of the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Portland, had a short but influential political career. His chief interest was horse racing and his visits to Westminster were infrequent. However, he so vehemently opposed the repeal of the Corn Laws that in 1846 he became leader of the Protectionist cause, bringing about the fall of Peel and causing the permanent division of Peel's party.

The papers of Lord George Bentinck (Pw L) form part of the Portland (Welbeck) Collection held in Manuscripts and Special Collections and include extensive personal and political correspondence.