

they proposed to use on their journey to London. The meeting was dispersed by the military, some 200 of the ringleaders were taken prisoners, and many of the remainder started off on their journey to London. A large body of troops were stationed at Stockport and guarded the entrances to the town—the Old Road, the New Road (Lancashire Hill), and the road leading to Didsbury (now Heaton Lane). It is estimated that the Blanketeers numbered several hundred, but they were followed by a crowd of 10,000 persons. The Riot Act was read when the people arrived on the outskirts of the town, but as they were determined to proceed, 163 Blanketeers were arrested and placed in prison for safety. The remainder dispersed in all directions, some 180 travelled to Macclesfield, but were arrested and brought back to be confined in prison at Stockport. Most of the prisoners it may be added were subsequently discharged without trial.

It is extremely doubtful whether the Stockport workers had anything to do with the march of the Blanketeers, and the chief interest locally is the fact that the main body of marchers was stopped by the military at Heaton Norris, when one of the residents, John James, who was watching the procession, was killed. Someone threw a stone, whereupon one of the regular soldiers came into James' garden and killed him by cutting his head open.

Trade revived at the end of 1817, and 1818 was a year of prosperity. Wages, however, were low, and in connection with the cotton trade a number of strikes took place, all of which concerned Stockport, two of them applying only to the town.

The first strike was of the Stockport jenny spinners, who seem to have been an isolated body who acted apart from the other spinners. Their wages, which in 1814 were 3d. a pound, had been reduced to 2d. a pound. These workers turned from the reform movement to industrial action in the hope of gaining a share in the renewed commercial prosperity. The jenny spinners asked to return to the 1814 pay, but were refused. About 800 of them then struck, and after remaining out for some six weeks, settled the dispute with their masters by agreeing to take 2½d. a pound, a figure which worked out to a wage of 17s. 6d. to 19s. a week for a fourteen-hour day. There were no prosecutions, and the jenny spinners lived during the strike on credit from the shopkeepers.

The second strike was that of the Stockport power-loom weavers, who were receiving 15s. a week, and asked for an advance in rates which would come to an extra 5s. a week. Things went quietly till Mr Garside, head of one of the chief factories, introduced some workpeople from Burton-on-Trent, to whom he was reported to be paying the wages which he refused his old workers. There was a riot for three days round Garside's factory and round the house where the imported workers were lodged, and a certain amount of stone-throwing and window breaking. The Riot Act was read, and the Yeomanry and some soldiers from Manchester called in before the mob would go home. Owing to the energetic action of the magistrates' clerk, Mr Lloyd, who raided a public-house where strike-pay was being distributed, and took various men and women into custody under the Combination Act, the back of the strike was broken, and the power-loom weavers returned to work without an advance.

Another strike in which Stockport was concerned was the spinners' strike which commenced in July, 1818. This lasted about two months, and was beaten by the activity of the magistrates, the employment of troops, and, last of all, by hunger.