

Dominating the northern section of the valley are two spectacular viaducts, one, spanning the Spodden at a height of 105ft. This was built in 1867 to carry the Rochdale-Bacup railway line. The second marks the boundary of the Dell itself, provided road access to nearby Broadley station.

BEDROOM HANDLOOMS

At the time these towering memorials to the railway age were under construction, the Healey area was dominated economically and socially by John and Robert Tweeddale, woollen manufacturers of Broadley Mills.

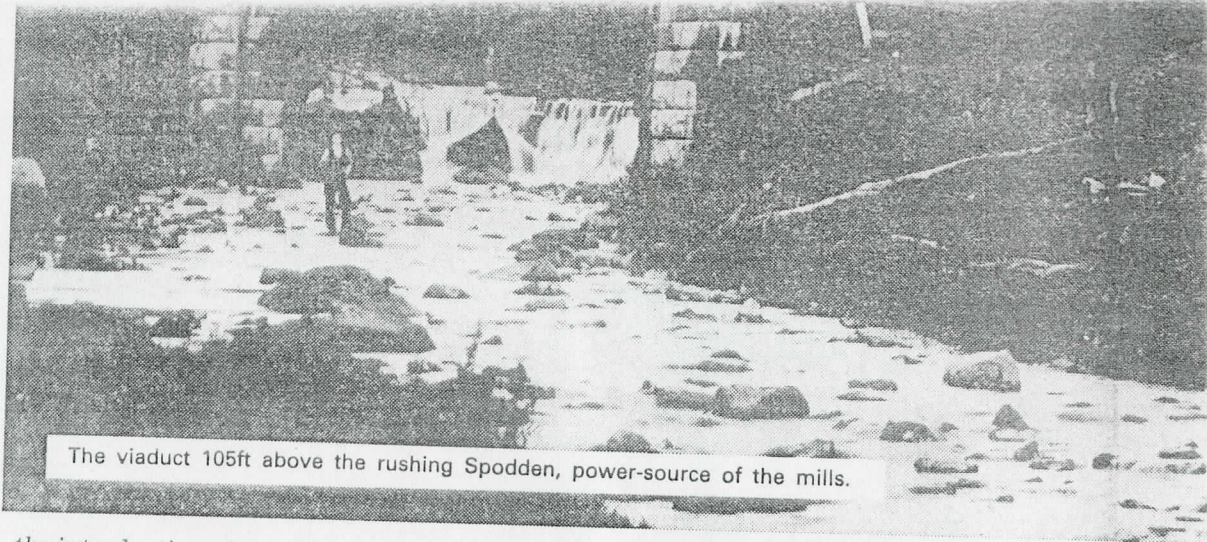
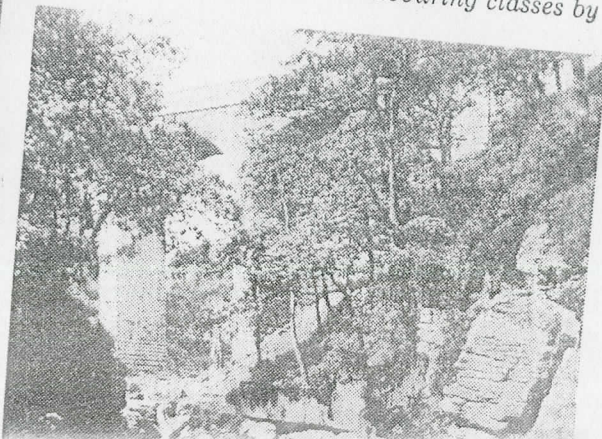
The company had been started by Jacob Tweeddale, the son of a farmer who (as mentioned in my Observer feature of 1 June) saved enough money to buy handlooms which he installed in his bedroom "and carried his pieces to Belfield to be finished at Robert Leach's fulling mill."

The two subsequently entered into partnership and having established a mill at Tonacliffe, built the Healey Hall Bottoms Mill in 1813.

Fifteen years later Tweeddale was involved in what was, locally, perhaps the most significant industrial dispute of the early 19th century.

When the company installed improved spinning machinery, the Rochdale Association of Journeyman Weavers and Man Spinners called a general stoppage throughout the area.

They declared: It is our intention to encourage by all the means in our power, persons not to work after such machinery as you are now bringing into use, as we are certain that no good or benefit can arise to the labouring classes by



The viaduct 105ft above the rushing Spodden, power-source of the mills.

the introduction of the machinery in question . . . the sole benefit . . . (would) go to the proprietors and not to the workmen."

The lengthy, bitter and acrimonious dispute was eventually settled in favour of Leach and Tweeddale, effectively giving the green light for increasing mechanisation throughout the Rochdale area (although machine smashing was to remain a prominent form of industrial protest for several years).

The Tweeddale family prospered, moved into part of nearby Healey Hall (rebuilt in 1774 by John Chadwick), and became extremely active within the local community.

Jacob Tweeddale, in particular, was involved in the establishment of Christ Church Healey in 1849.

By 1861 Healey Hall was occupied by Robert L Tweeddale (Jacob's eldest son, born in 1819), his wife Margaret and his mother-in-law, Sarah Chadwick, together with assorted cousins and servants.

These photographs were loaned to the Local Studies Library by a direct descendant of the Tweeddale family.

They show members of the family in and around the Dell in the mid-1860s.

But perhaps the most remarkable of the prints is that showing some sort of ceremony on the Broadley section of the Rochdale-Bacup railway line in or around 1867.

The line, the financial viability of which was by no means unanimously agreed upon by the Board of the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway, was opened to traffic, as far as Facit, on 1 November 1870 and Tweeddale's involvement (even if unofficially) indicates the continuing importance of this local manufacturing family.



Cutting the Rochdale-Bacup line, 1867. J