

# Thomas Nelson and family

**I**n 1798 Thomas Nelson opened a second-hand bookshop at the head of the West Bow, near St Giles' Cathedral.

Its picture later acted as the colophon of Nelsons and can be seen in many forms throughout this exhibition. Thomas soon realised the existence of a ready market for cheap, standard editions of non-copyright works and he attempted to satisfy it by publishing popular reprints of classics.

The company gained its 'Sons' when William and Thomas II entered their father's business in 1835 and 1839 respectively. Thomas, the father, died in 1861. William concentrated his talents on the marketing side, while Thomas devoted his to editing and production. William died in 1887, Thomas in 1892. They were succeeded by George Brown, Thomas's nephew, who directed the company until Thomas III and Ian, Thomas's sons, were able to join him and John Buchan as partners.



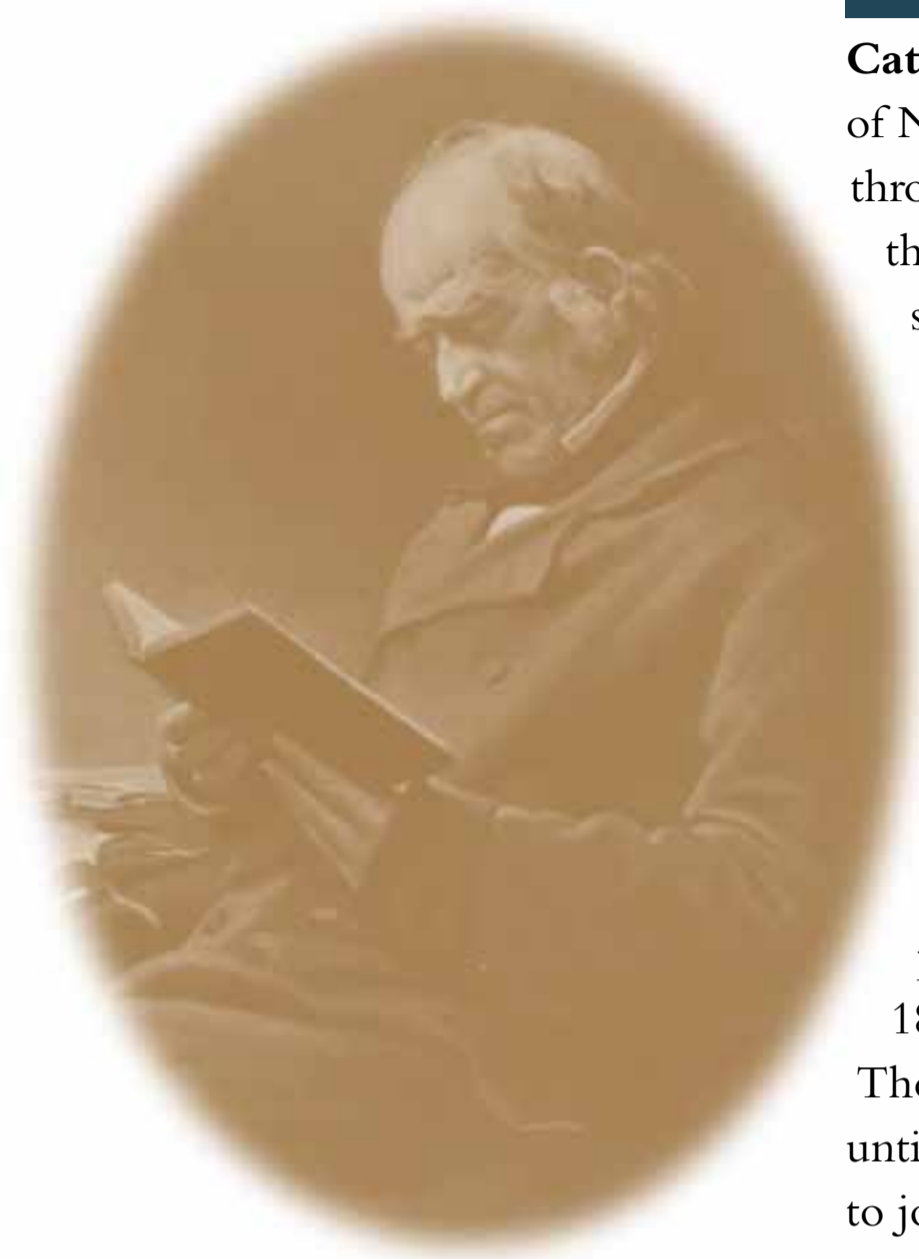
Thomas Nelson II



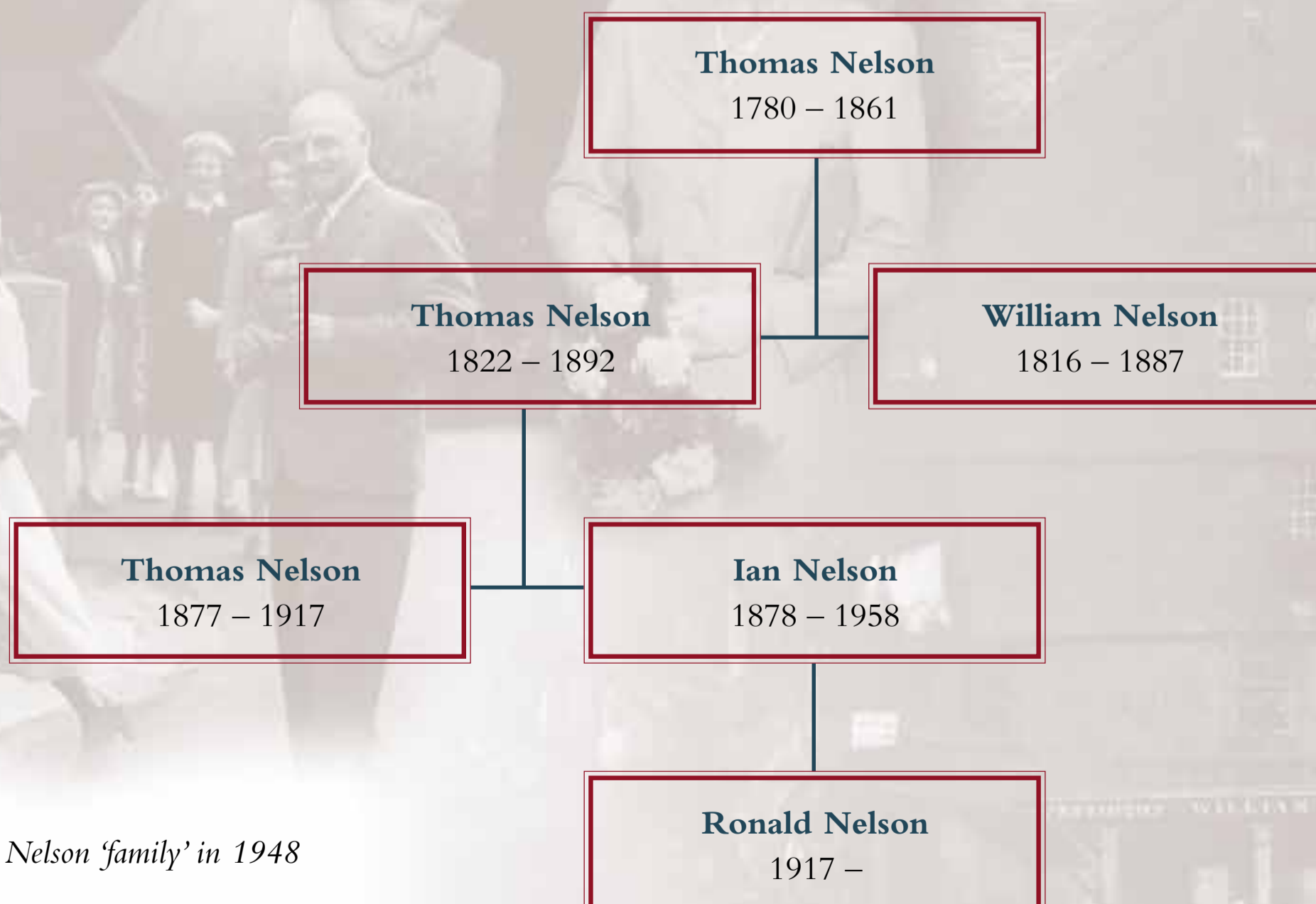
William Nelson

rundown of Nelsons and initiated its long-term decline. Much of the effort expended during the inter-war period, particularly in expanding the education list and reducing the dependence on reprints, represented merely an attempt to reverse that decline. Ian Nelson remained head of the firm until his death in 1958. Ian Nelson's successor, his son, Ronnie Nelson, seemed less interested in the successful management of the family firm than previous generations. In 1962 Thomas Nelson and Sons was absorbed into the Thomson Organisation, in an effort to sustain its academic and educational publishing interests on a global scale. The printing division of Nelsons was sold to the Edinburgh company Morrison and Gibb in 1968.

**The next generation**  
After the death of Thomas Nelson III in 1917, Ian Nelson took over as head of the family firm. The First World War, through the denial of foreign markets, the loss of manpower and the general exigencies of wartime, led to the temporary



Thomas Nelson



The Royal Family meets the Nelson 'family' in 1948