

# From West Bow to Parkside

**W**hen William and Thomas II entered their father's business at the West Bow, each brother lent fresh energy and a natural acumen for publishing to the expansion of the firm. New premises were found at Blyth's Close, Castle Hill to accommodate the increased volume of production; yet even these proved inadequate as the company prospered. However, with the building in 1845 of a new printing house at Hope Park, the complete book manufacturing process was carried out under one roof, with a pay-roll of over four hundred employees.



*Castle Hill*



*Fire at Hope Park*

## **A new beginning**

A fire devastated Hope Park in 1878, causing damage estimated between £100,000 and £200,000. Within two months Thomas Nelson and Sons were back in operation, albeit on a limited scale. Within two years the production works moved to a new site at Parkside near the brothers' own properties. The calamity had brought the fortuitous benefit of investment in new plant from which a flood of reprints, schoolbooks, prize books and religious books poured – all at inexpensive prices. The New Factory, capable of producing 200,000 books a week, was built at Parkside in 1907 to undertake the various Classics series.

## **A fresh direction**

The educational list grew in tandem, helping to maintain a healthy volume of sales. The take-over of the publishing house of T. C. & E. C. Jack in



*Original premises at West Bow*

1915, with its strengths in children's titles, consolidated the direction to which the company was to commit itself. In the post-1945 period, this direction was predominant: the education list became all-important to the company; and the tradition of cheap reprints, alive since its foundation, died. To compensate, overseas markets for textbooks were nurtured.

The take-over by the Thomson Organisation was a conscious extension of this strategy. However, as a consequence, the production plant was divorced from the publishing division. The former remained in Edinburgh, while the latter took up permanent residence in London. The printing division of Nelsons was sold on in 1968; the Parkside works, at one time the glory of the firm, were razed to the ground to make way for the headquarters of an insurance company.

