

William Nicholas Willis, Père, Fils and Family and the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company

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I

William Nicholas Willis (1858–1922) is one of the more obscure Australian writers and publishers of the first half of the twentieth century.¹ Better known in his home country as a corrupt politician, he left Australia around 1910 for Singapore before moving onto London a year later. In addition to writing a couple of racing novels,² he mounted a spirited campaign against the evils of the white slave trade,³ producing several polemical books on the topic.

As well as being a writer, Willis was also a publisher. He established the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company in London around 1914, mainly to publish his own books and pulp fiction novels, many appearing under the pseudonym of “Bree Narran.” Most of these novels rehashed the formula of an innocent young woman being led into social disgrace by the amorous attentions of an unscrupulous cad before being rescued by the love of a good man.

This article will briefly chronicle Willis’s life, survey his books and then focus on his publishing activities including those of his son, also William Nicholas Willis, who took over the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company after his father’s death. It will also try to solve the vexed question of who wrote the “Bree Narran” novels: Willis himself, his son, or Willis Sr.’s effective de facto wife, Catherine Mercy Marion Simmons, also known as Mercy Lehane Willis.

II

William Willis (known as “Nick” Willis) was a self-made knock-about man, or, as he was once described in the Melbourne *Punch*:

¹ The best treatment to date has been a section in John Arnold, “Australian Books, Publishers and Writers in England,” in Carl Bridge, Robert Crawford and David Dunstan, eds., *Australians in Britain: The Twentieth-Century Experience* (Clayton: Monash University Press, 2009). See also Willis’s entry in John Arnold, John Hay, Kerry Kilner and Terence O’Neill, *The Bibliography of Australian Literature* (St Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 2008), 4, 726–27; E. Morris Miller and Frederick T. Macartney, *Australian Literature: A Bibliography to 1938... Extended to 1950* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1956); and the entry for Willis in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB)* at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/willis-william-nicholas-9125>.

² *Bluey Grey: A Sport Abroad, a Racing Romance* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent, [1912]) and *The Lady Jockey* (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co, [1922]).

³ That is, prostitution. See checklist at the end of this article for a listing of Willis’s books.

a stout florid man, whose vigour seems unabated by trouble, who challenges attention by his strong individualism, who talks in the racy vernacular of the street, and who may be relied on to put up a good fight.⁴

He was born in 1858 in Mudgee, New South Wales.⁵ In his youth and as a young man he followed a variety of occupations. The first was, at the age of 14, becoming a shop assistant in Dubbo. It is alleged that at the time he was illiterate but the local shopkeeper took him under his wing and taught him to read and write.⁶ As a lonely hawker along the Macquarie, Darling and Bogan Rivers, he became a dedicated reader. His hawking days were followed by co-owning and managing various country stores and then acquiring the *Central Australian* and *Bourke Telegraph* newspapers. He was also supposedly a one-time Shakespearean actor.

Willis won the Legislative Assembly seat of Bourke as a Protectionist in February 1889. Holding his seat in 1891, he then represented Barwon from 1894–1904. He moved to Sydney and established himself as a land and financial agent, advertising that he needed no “black-tracker” to show him through the land laws. Throughout his time as a Member of Parliament he allegedly made and lost several fortunes through his land dealings.⁷

In 1890 Willis and a partner founded the notorious *Truth* newspaper. To protect himself from litigation, he sold the paper to partners including fellow MP, W. P. Crick,⁸ and John Norton,⁹ although he remained a major shareholder. In 1896 he sold out his interest to Norton, possibly as a result of blackmail. He was once involved in a stand-up fist-fight with Norton and others in Sydney in 1893.

More importantly, when drinking mate and crony, W. P. Crick, was Secretary for Lands, Willis was involved in numerous shady land deals. When a Royal Commission was appointed in 1905 to enquire into the administration of the Lands Department,¹⁰ Willis fled to South Africa, a place he had previously visited and made money. He returned to Sydney under police escort in 1906 to face criminal charges, along with Crick, of fraud and conspiracy, but a jury twice failed to convict the pair.

⁴ “A Man from ‘Out-Back,’” *Punch* (Melbourne), 2 August 1906, 152.

⁵ Biographical details are mainly taken from Willis’s *ADB* entry (see note 1) supplemented by various obituaries for Willis, noted separately.

⁶ “Late ‘Nick’ Willis,” *Western Age* (Dubbo), 21 April 1922, 3.

⁷ James R. Tyrrell in *Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney* (Sydney: Angus and Robertson, 1952), 118, recounts the story of Willis being the brunt of a notable witticism—“Willis is barking”—by Charles Dickens’ son, Edward Bulwer Lytton Dickens, in the New South Wales Parliament.

⁸ William Patrick (Paddy) Crick (1862–1908). See his entry in the *ADB*: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/crick-william-patrick-paddy-5821>.

⁹ John Norton (1858–1916). See his entry in the *ADB*: <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/norton-john-7863>.

¹⁰ See <http://search.records.nsw.gov.au/agencies/4959>.

In response to the 1893 brawl with Norton, the *Bulletin* ran what Cyril Pearl, in his aptly titled *Wild Men of Sydney*, describes as a very constructive comment:

The only remedy for the Crick-Willis-Norton trouble is to exile the combatants by Act of Parliament, and send Crick to Bokhara, and Willis to Morocco, and Norton to the City of Mexico, each having to find heavy securities that he won't leave his place of exile until the other two are dead.¹¹

This is, in effect, what eventually happened. Crick went to his grave, Norton to alcoholism and Willis to England via the Straits Settlements (Singapore and Penang) and possibly India.¹² Willis's departure was, in one respect, the act of a true patriot: leaving his country for his country's good.

III

Pearl summarises Willis's post-Australian career as follows:

[He] ... became a publisher of cheap pornography. As the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company, he decorated the bookstalls with a series of gaily-jacketed books on prostitution, and gilded vice.

However, Willis's expatriate career is much more interesting than this trite summary. It is unclear exactly when he left Australia. A newspaper report of June 1909 refers to an alleged attempted robbery at his home in Sydney, as a result of which he was planning to send his wife and family to England for their protection.¹³ But they stayed and he left. By September 1910 he was firmly established in the Straits Settlement, racing and selling horses in Singapore and Penang.¹⁴ He was also planning to start, and possibly did establish, a newspaper which aimed to be "at once clean, healthy, critical and just" while exposing abuses by the "Clique and Coterie" in local society.¹⁵

Funding for Willis's move to Singapore and his associated activities there came from his wife, still in Sydney and by this time a declared bankrupt. She had bor-

¹¹ Pearl, *Wild Men of Sydney*, 80.

¹² "Nick' Willis," *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 27 February 1911, 2, refers to him "bobbing up in the Straits Settlements as a newspaper proprietor." A review of Willis's racing novel, *Blue Grey*, in the *Truth* (Sydney, 21 July 1912, 7), mentions Willis going to India and starting a newspaper there and also selling horses, but the reference to India is probably an error.

¹³ *Clarence and Richmond River Examiner* (Grafton), 8 June 1909, 5.

¹⁴ *Richmond River Herald and Northern Districts Advertiser*, 16 September 1910, 6. The June 1911 newspaper report on Mrs Willis's bankruptcy (see note 16) suggests that Willis went to Singapore some fifteen months previously, c. January 1910.

¹⁵ Reported in the *Dubbo Liberal and Macquarie Advocate*, 22 February 1911, 2. An obituary for Willis in the *Singapore Free Press and Mercantile Advertiser* (22 May 1922, 3) refers to Willis having taken up residence in Penang and being "interested in Straits racing" and that "he contributed to the local press."

rowed £650 against her life insurance policy and given it to her husband.¹⁶ Willis's behaviour in Singapore and Penang appears to have been poor. A police report on him stated that "his associates in Singapore were jockeys, book-makers and pimps. He frequented Malay Street and was excessively drunk."¹⁷

Malay Street was in the heart of the brothel area of Singapore. Willis was to put to good use the time he spent there. From Singapore he went to England, most likely via Egypt, where he frequented the seedier areas of Cairo. From there he probably made his way overland to England, arriving sometime in the second half of 1911.¹⁸ On 3 November 1911, the *Chelmsford Chronicle* noted that William Nicholas Willis, "an author and journalist of Victoria St, London," was charged along with another man for illegally importing eight pounds of cigars.¹⁹

Apart from a self-published biography of W. P. Crick,²⁰ Willis's first books appeared in June 1912, when Simpkin Marshall published his racing romance, *Bluey Grey, a Sport Abroad*,²¹ and Stanley Paul *The White Slave Market*, written in conjunction with noted social reformer Mrs. Archibald Mackirdy (Olive Christian Malvery).²² The *The White Slave Market* was a very good seller,²³ going through several editions, and provided Willis with a public profile as a campaigner against the evils of prostitution.²⁴ In the book he gives details of its spread in Singapore. According to James Warren, a historian of prostitution in South East Asia,²⁵ Willis's stated numbers on the women and children involved were outrageously exaggerated, leading to much consternation among local authorities in Singapore. A long rebuttal was sent to the *Times* (for information rather than publication) and the police were asked to compile a report on Willis's behaviour in Singapore.

¹⁶ "Mrs W. N. Willis' Estate. Assignees Examinations, Sydney," *Newcastle Morning Herald & Miner's Advocate*, 28 June 1911, 6. The report gives some interesting (and unflattering) details on W. N. Willis's dealings in NSW.

¹⁷ Quoted in James F. Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki: Prostitution in Singapore, 1870–1940* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 155.

¹⁸ He is not listed in the "UK, Incoming Passenger Lists, 1878–1960" available via Ancestry.com, suggesting that he travelled overland to the UK from Egypt.

¹⁹ *Chelmsford Chronicle*, 3 November 1911. The defendants were found guilty and were each fined £6 16s and 7s 2d costs.

²⁰ *The Life of W. P. Crick* (Sydney: W. N. Willis, 1909).

²¹ Allegedly based on the career of a well-known Australian jockey, according to a review in *Truth* (Sydney) 21 July 1912, 7.

²² For Olive Christian Malvery (1877–1914), see Ellen Ross, ed., *Slum Travelers: Ladies and London Poverty, 1860–1920* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1970), chapter 12.

²³ In a court case over royalties (see note 30), the publisher stated that sales totalled 54,000 while Willis claimed that 65,000 copies were sold.

²⁴ For an overview of the campaign against the white slave trade, see Paula Bartley, *Prostitution, Prevention and Reform in England, 1860–1914* (London: Routledge, 2000).

²⁵ Warren, *Ah Ku and Karayuki*, 154.

A succession of books from Willis's pen followed, all with catchy titles such as *Western Men with Eastern Morals*, *Anti-Christ in Egypt* and *The Kaiser and his Barbarians*.²⁶ He appears to have started the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. in 1914, the name clearly linked to his experiences in the East and promoting himself as an expert and public campaigner against the white slave trade and the fear of contamination from the East.²⁷ The first titles were sensational accounts of white slave trafficking in London, including *White Slaves in a Piccadilly Flat*, drawing on contemporary public outrage at the "Piccadilly Flat Case" of Queenie Gerald, who, in 1913, received a three-month sentence for earning her income from prostituting young girls to middle class men.²⁸

After the formation of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. few of Willis's books were published by mainstream publishers.²⁹ This may well have been an effort on Willis's part to benefit more substantially from the publication of his writings.³⁰

IV

Some of Willis's early books are marked by a self-righteous, moralistic stance that is ultimately unconvincing; a conscious attempt to reflect conventional moral attitudes, while at the same time titillating his readership with sensational anecdotes. The following extract describing vice in Cairo from his *Anti-Christ in Egypt* is typical of Willis's high-handed moral tone on the issue:

As a public duty I went through these streets or, rather, dirty lanes ... with a strong guard. The sight was most degrading. Nothing is seen in the East not even in Singapore, the home of the damned and the half-way house to hell, to equal this spectacle of licensed prostitution in the fish markets, or, to use the native term, the Wazza Bazaar.³¹

In another section he relates the story of a young champion Australian athlete who succumbed to the temptations of the Port Said evil, resulting in germs getting into his body and leading to his death a few weeks after returning to Australia. The athlete's physical decay is described as follows:

²⁶ See checklist at end of this article for details.

²⁷ One of Willis's books, *The Taint in the Blood* (London: Camden Publishing Co., 1915), was advertised as "a novel of the East ... a sparkling, thrilling story dealing with the ever-acute problem of the inter-mingling, in marriage, of the blood of East and West."

²⁸ See <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1913/aug/06/piccadilly-flat-case-queenie-gerald> and George Dangerfield, *The Strange Death of Liberal England, 1910-1914* (London: Constable, 1936), 205-6.

²⁹ Laurie published *The Grip of the Venereal Microbe* and *Should Girls Be Told?*, both in 1917.

³⁰ Support for this claim is an April 1918 court case in which Willis unsuccessfully sued the publisher Stanley Paul for copyright infringement, contending that the copyright of three titles published by Stanley Paul had reverted to him (see *Times*, 23 April 1918, 2 and 24 April 1918, 2, and *Singapore Times*, 28 June 1918, 7).

³¹ W. N. Willis, *Anti-Christ in Egypt* (London: Anglo-Eastern [1914]), 28.

By the time he reached Sydney the hidden plague had got such a grip on his system that he lost all heart.... His fine, straight frame became bent and twisted, his joints stiffened, his muscles relaxed, and ... he saw that he was now but the shadow and wreck of his former vigorous self.... Within a few weeks of his landing in Sydney he died, lamented by hundreds of admirers and friends who were astounded by his sudden death, and bitterly mourned by his brokenhearted family who knew the truth.³²

This was clearly meant as a warning to all young men who travelled to England, and, interestingly, resembles the sad story of the celebrated Australian cricketer Victor Trumper. He and his debilitating illness and subsequent early death aged 38 in June 1915 may have given Willis the inspiration for his “case study.” According to Trumper’s entry in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, “a delicate tinge always shadowed his grace. From at least 1908 the darkness gradually deepened. By late 1914 an insidious kidney disease began to take its final toll.”³³ The entry was written by historian Bede Nairn, but it could have been drafted by Willis himself.

Willis’s crusade against the evils of the white slave trade was allegedly supported by various religious figures whose supportive quotations appear in the unsigned preface to *Should Girls Be Told?*, under the heading, “The Importance of Mr. W. N. Willis’s Books.” The preface begins:

When Mr Willis wrote the first of his several books on the social evil, the public at large was afraid to speak, even in whispers, on the distressing subject. Gradually, however, his untiring and persistent efforts to awaken the national conscience to the system of commercialised vice (with its attendant evil venereal disease), which thrives in our midst, have succeeded in completely revolutionizing public opinion.³⁴

Such public opinion and outrage led the Metropolitan Police Force to establish a White Slave Traffic Branch. But according to Paula Bartley in her book on prostitution in England before the First War,

[t]he White Slave Traffic Branch believed that there was an ‘utter absence’ of evidence to justify the alarming statements put forward by social purists ... [and] as far as they were concerned, white slavery was of such small proportion and so sporadic that it did not justify police attention.³⁵

Although running a campaign to protect girls from the evils of prostitution, and publishing a Sexual Science series with such titles as *Should Girls Be Told?*,

³² Ibid., 144–45.

³³ <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/trumper-victor-thomas-8862>.

³⁴ Preface, W. N. Willis, *Should Girls Be Told?*, (London: Laurie, 1917), vii.

³⁵ Bartley, *Prostitution*, 173.

Willis was no supporter of women's rights. He wrote the following response to Marie Stopes' bestseller, *Married Love*, in which she gave a rational and factual account of satisfying sexual intercourse from a women's viewpoint:

Let us ... in the name of true normal manhood and womanhood and indeed of the name of the British Empire endeavour to keep the imagination down at all costs—never purposely call it into play as suggested by Mrs Stopes ... the human imagination is the most deadly foe to the clean wholesome methods of Nature.³⁶

The initial small-scale nature of Willis's publishing business is suggested by the fact that it was not until 1916 that the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. was registered as a business, as indicated by the following notice in the *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*:

Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., Ltd, registered with a capital of £1,000 in £1 shares to carry on the business of printers, publishers, bookbinders and print-sellers etc. The subscribers are W. N. Willis and W. S. J. Diplock.³⁷

In addition to publishing books, the firm also issued postcards during the Great War. These depicted scenes such as a Zeppelin flying over London and searchlights beaming into the sky above St. Paul's.³⁸ There were also recruiting propaganda cards including one entitled "United for Freedom Against German Oppression" that depicted a white feather (indicating cowardice) in the centre surrounded by the national flags of all the countries involved in the allied cause.³⁹

The business was very much a family affair. Not long after Willis arrived in England he became involved with Catherine Mercy Marion Simmons, a journalist in her early twenties.⁴⁰ She began to work for Willis around 1912.⁴¹ She was also to bear him three children, the first a son called William, meaning that Willis had two sons named William, one born in Sydney, the second in London in 1914. In 1917, with Willis as one of two witnesses, Simmons married Daniel Lehane Willis in a registry office in Lambeth.⁴² Lehane, Willis's nephew, was a Private serving in the Australian Imperial Force (A. I. F.) and was four years younger than Simmons.⁴³

³⁶ Quoted in June Rose, *Marie Stopes and the Sexual Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993), 114.

³⁷ *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer* 78–79 (1916): 84.

³⁸ The card depicting searchlights is in the possession of John Arnold, while the Zeppelin image was located on the internet (10 September 2015) at https://c2.staticflickr.com/8/7566/15508123190_8129631dcc_b.jpg.

³⁹ Found via an internet search: Mike Smith-Collectible WWI Postcards.

⁴⁰ Details from her 1917 marriage certificate.

⁴¹ Stated by her in Willis's 1918 court case against Stanley Paul over royalties (see note 30). On that same occasion she also claimed to be Willis's niece.

⁴² Copy of Marriage Certificate, MXG 572054, dated 9 July 2015.

⁴³ Richard Daniel Lehane (1894–1952) also known as Terence Patrick O'Brien, 47th Infantry

According to Simmons' granddaughter, the marriage was simply one of convenience, Willis paying his nephew fifty pounds or so to make the mother of his three English children, an "honest" woman.⁴⁴ Willis himself could not marry her as he still had a wife back in Sydney. After her marriage, Simmons went under the name of Mercy Lehane Willis and was to become an Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. author and quite possibly, under the pseudonym of "Bree Narran," the company's most successful writer. Her marriage, understandably, was short lived, with her "husband" returning to Australia on a troopship in May 1919.⁴⁵

Willis's Sydney-born son, also William Nicholas Willis, but always known as "Billy," was also very closely involved in the business. Born in 1898, he enlisted in the 6th Light Horse Regiment of the A. I. F. on March 1916 and as a Private saw active service in Egypt and France.⁴⁶ He spent a period in London with his father before sailing to Sydney in September 1919 after receiving his discharge. Returning to London a year or so later, he joined his father's business, taking over the publishing firm after Willis Sr.'s death in April 1922.⁴⁷ He ran the business until about 1931.

Another family member involved in the business was George Hume, Willis's Australian son-in-law. In November 1920, the *Times* reported that Hume, the secretary and manager of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., had been found guilty of distributing an obscene publication, an objectionable translation by "Bree Narran" of Guy de Maupassant's *Une Vie* (translated as *A Woman's Life*).⁴⁸

Battalion, AIF. Date of Embarkation, 27 Oct 1916 from Brisbane. Details from First World War Embarkation Rolls. Date and place of birth taken from family tree: <http://www.43albion.com/getperson.php?personID=I1295&tree=tree1#cite1>. It is just possible that Daniel Lehane Willis was actually Willis's illegitimate son. His father in the family tree noted above is listed simply as "unknown" and Lehane Willis claimed that his father was "William Willis" in a court abduction case in Sydney in 1929. See "Did He Marry his Half-Sister," *Truth* (Sydney), 7 July 1929, 24.

⁴⁴ Email from Antonia Willis to John Arnold, 19 January 2015.

⁴⁵ Date of return to Australia given in his entry in the First World War Nominal Roll. His life in the decade after he returned to Australia was spent in and out of jail for a series of offences.

⁴⁶ Details from First World War Nominal Roll.

⁴⁷ Willis died on 3 April 1922. He is described on his death certificate (DYD 891398, copy 13 July 2015) as "Managing Director, Publishing Cos." Willis died without leaving a will, but not penniless as is asserted in his entry in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. However, he appears to have left no money to Mercy Lehane Willis and his three children by her. In a deed of administration dated 4 October 1922, his effects, valued at £8296 (about £329,500 today), passed to his son, William Nicholas Willis, described as a "company director." Details from England & Wales, National Probate Calendar (Index of Wills and Administrations). Sourced from Ancestry.com.

⁴⁸ *Times*, 3 November 1920, 9. The prosecution's case was based on the actual translation—"a certain proportion of the work had been elaborated out of all reason, and in such a manner as to render it highly objectionable"—rather than on the original work. The defendant pleaded ignorance of the contents and said he "would destroy the remainder of his stock."

V

“Bree Narran” was the most prolific of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co.’s authors. Some sixteen novels appeared under his name plus translations of novels and short story collections by Balzac, Paul de Kock and Guy de Maupassant. The Bree and the Narran are rivers in northern New South Wales, where Willis once worked, and are no doubt the source of the pseudonym. W. H. Holden, in *Eliza Emma Crouch alias Cora Pearl* (1950), referring to the highly coloured 1919 novel *Cora Pearl* by “Bree Narran,” believed that Willis Sr. was “Bree Narran.”⁴⁹ And, in a 1956 letter to the Sydney *Daily Telegraph*, J. V. Marshall described meeting Willis Jr. in London in the early twenties and being shown “several gaudily jacketed paper-back novels by W N Willis” and also titles by “Bree Narran,” which the son claimed were by his father.⁵⁰ Cyril Pearl, possibly having seen Marshall’s letter, concludes his outline of W. N. Willis’s career in *Wild Men of Sydney* with:

Mr Willis, too I suspect was the Australian writer, who under the nom-de-plume of Bree Narran wrote ... many ... titillating romances.⁵¹

This attribution to Willis of the “Bree Narran” pseudonym was generally accepted until the entry for Willis appeared in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*.⁵² It stated that the “Bree Narran” books were in fact written by Willis Jr. No reason was given for this claim but it was later suggested it was made on the basis of several of the “Bree Narran” novels and translations appearing after Willis Sr.’s death in 1922.⁵³

Willis Jr. managed the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. for a decade before moving to Dublin in 1932 where he opened Billy’s Snack Bar, one of the city’s first late night restaurants. In 1939 he opened the Green Rooster and ran it until shortly before his death in 1960. Various obituaries refer to him as a “man of much enterprise and ideas,” “a brilliant raconteur” with “a fund of anecdote and reminiscence.”⁵⁴ Two of the obituaries mentioned his work in his father’s

⁴⁹ W. H. Holden, *The Pearl from Plymouth: Eliza Emma Crouch alias Cora Pearl* (London: British Technical and General Press, 1950), footnote 15. Holden also believed that the pseudonym “Bree Narran” came from the names of two Australian rivers.

⁵⁰ J. V. Marshall, “Bree Narran,” *Daily Telegraph* (Sydney), 21 March 1956, 2. The letter was written in a response to a reference to “Bree Narran” in a review in the previous week’s paper (24 March 1956) of Miller and Macartney, *Australian Literature*. Possibly written by the author James Vance Marshall; see his entry in *Bibliography of Australian Literature*.

⁵¹ Pearl, *Wild Men of Sydney*, 190–91.

⁵² See note 1.

⁵³ Email to John Arnold from Daryl Bennett, Deputy General Editor, of the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, 16 July 2004. At least five “Bree Narran” novels were published in 1919, then there appears to be a gap for a few years before several more appeared between 1922 and 1924. See the attached checklist for further details.

⁵⁴ Undated press obituaries for William Nicholas Willis, Jr. sent by his daughter to John Arnold.

publishing business, but none made any reference to his ever having been an author. This focus on publishing rather than writing is confirmed by correspondence with Willis Jr.'s daughter and granddaughter. They also stated that he was not a French speaker, making it virtually impossible for him to have been the translator of the French novels published by the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co.

As such, we worked on the basis that the "Bree Narran" novels and translations were by Willis Sr. despite the problem that several were published after his death and that there was no evidence of his having been fluent in French. Both a published book chapter and an earlier version of this article were written on the assumption that W. N. Willis Sr. was "Bree Narran."⁵⁵

However, recent email contact with another descendant of the extended Willis family and subsequent research has shown that Catherine Mercy Marion Simmons, aka Mercy Lehane Willis (the mother of Willis's three London-born children) was most likely the author of the "Bree Narran" novels.⁵⁶ The descendant, Lehane Willis's granddaughter, provided a scan of a 1929 press cutting from an American newspaper, the *Daily Notes*, which included the following:

Mrs. Mercy Lehane-Willis, a 30-year old English woman, who, under various pen names, has written more than 30 novels, has joined the ranks of London's "Pavement Artists."

The Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. published two novels by an "M. Lehane-Willis" but we had assumed that this was another pseudonym of W. N. Willis Sr. The press cutting was tantalising but, despite the descendant's belief that her grandmother wrote the "Bree Narran" novels, more proof was needed. An internet search provided it via a further press report. Headed "Rotorua Native in London,"⁵⁷ it referred to a writing partnership established in London by Hopepa Te Rake Te Kiri and Mrs Mercy Lehane Willis, a "novelist known by the pen-names of 'Bree Narran' and 'Anthony Upperton.'"⁵⁸ The article then goes on to list eight "Bree Narran" titles written by Lehane Willis, adding "plus eight others," matching the total number of sixteen titles by "Bree Narran" published by the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co.

Finding these references also helped solve another nagging doubt about Willis Sr. being "Bree Narran." The plots of many—a cad and a bounder taking advantage of a young woman but being exposed, jailed or worse at the end of

⁵⁵ See note 1.

⁵⁶ Emails to John Arnold from Antonia Willis, 17 and 19 January 2015. Also telephone conversation with her, 21 June 2015.

⁵⁷ "Rotorua Native in London," *New Zealand Herald*, 9 September 1926.

⁵⁸ Herbert Jenkins published *Solomon the Unwise* by "Anthony Upperton" in London in 1924. This appears to be the only book that appeared under the pseudonym. Te Kiri died in 1965. See <http://teaohou.natlib.govt.nz/journals/teaohou/issue/Mao50TeA/c40.html>. Although the press report referred to specific writing proposals, none appear to have been published (at least in book form).

novel—do not quite fit Willis's known persona and suggest that they were written by a woman not a man. This supposition was confirmed by a recent re-reading of one of the "Bree Narran" novels.⁵⁹

Although it can now be stated with some confidence that the "Bree Narran" novels were written by Mercy Lehane Willis, the question remains what input, besides the creation of the pseudonym, Willis (or his son) might have had. Certainly, "Bree Narran" was promoted in the Anglo-Eastern catalogues and newspaper advertisements as being an Australian writer, and two obituaries for Willis in Australian country newspaper refer to him writing novels in collaboration with an English author, one incorrectly saying they were about Australian bush life.⁶⁰

Some of the novels have passing Australian references that suggest some input from Willis père or fils. *Six Nights on the Moon* involves travel across the world to the Pacific and Australia in an air ship. In *Seven Nights*, set during the war, the heroine is nursing convalescing soldiers, one of whom is a bronzed ANZAC named, somewhat appropriately, Loughlin Macquarie.⁶¹ The nurse and the soldier end up marrying.

What about the French translations by "Bree Narran"? Were these pirated texts or the work of Mercy Lehane Willis? We may never know. And some of the other books published by Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. could have been by Willis or Mercy Lehane Willis.⁶² *Marriage and Birth Control* by "Brenda Barwon" in the firm's "Sexual Science" series, for example, is probably by Willis, given the fact that, in addition to writing other books in the series under his own name, he had held the seat of Barwon in the NSW Parliament. However, Mercy Lehane Willis could easily have contributed to it, either as a sole or co-author.

VI

The more serious Anglo-Eastern publications were produced as quality hard-cover books designed to compete with the social and political output of mainstream publishers. On the other hand, the company's popular novels, including the steady stream of translations of French novels and short stories, were cheaply produced on poor quality pulp paper with garish, colourful covers to catch the attention of passers-by at railway bookstalls and newsstands.

In addition to the authorship question, the lack of records makes it difficult to establish an accurate publishing history for the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. Using the *English Catalogue of Books (ECB)* and dates of legal deposit copies, we can get some indicative publishing dates, although it is certainly possible that

⁵⁹ One could say it was almost blatantly obvious.

⁶⁰ *Singleton Argus*, 11 April 1922, 1; *Gilgandra Weekly*, 14 April 1922, 4.

⁶¹ Though the Christian name is spelled differently from that of the NSW colonial governor.

⁶² See checklist at the end of this article.

these were not the first printings of the novels. The accompanying checklist to this article attempts to list all of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co.'s publications, along with all the books by W. N. Willis.

While one has to be very sceptical of claims that sales of "Bree Narran" titles exceeded 3,000,000,⁶³ the novels do seem to have enjoyed some success. *The Kinema Girl* (1919) may have sold the 45,000 copies claimed for it, although the small number of copies in public institutions suggests otherwise.⁶⁴ However, it and the other "Bree Narran" novels and translations certainly had some Australian circulation. A Melbourne based distributor in 1922 imported 50 copies of each of five "Bree Narran" novels, 100 copies of the second series of *Crisp Stories*, and 100 each of two of the Paul de Kock translations.⁶⁵ And the winner of the Queensland *Longreach Leader* Christmas short story competition in December 1923, "The Rainmakers" by "Figaro," has a character who is keen to finish one of "Bree Narran"'s Paul de Kock translations, while a columnist in the Sydney newspaper, *The Land*, noted a new book by "Bree Narran," *Eve Out of Eden*, in November 1923. This was reviewed (unfavourably) in the *Australasian* in Melbourne, which included the comment that "such rubbish has seldom come our way."⁶⁶

It is clear that the death of Willis Sr. did not interrupt the publishing schedule of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. In fact, it seems likely that his son was responsible for an ambitious programme to bring new authors into the fold and to expand the publishing interests of the company beyond the writings of his father and those of "Bree Narran." "John Bernard," the pseudonym of Annie O'Meara de Vic Beamish (1883–1969), published the science fantasy novel, *The New Race of Devils*, in March 1921, with a preface by Willis Sr. in which he makes the false claim that "John Bernard" was for many years a prisoner of war in Germany. The book must have sold well, as it was reprinted in July 1921 and October 1922. Her second novel, *A Woman of Fire*, was published in March 1923. *Cuddl'ums* by "Valentine," the pseudonym of Archibald Thomas Pechey (1876–1961) appeared in May 1922 and *The Adjusters* the following November. Pechey later became a

⁶³ Claimed in a catalogue published at the back of *Crisp Stories, 1* (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., [1933]). The catalogue also gives the following print runs for the first three "Bree Narran" novels: *One Night*, 223rd thousand; *Three Nights*, 211th thousand; *Seven Nights*, 199th thousand. Again, these figures should be viewed with some scepticism.

⁶⁴ Fewer than ten according to a search of COPAC, Trove and World Catalog. Interestingly there are no American holdings. Chris O'Rourke, in "Bree Narran's *Kinema Girl*," a paper presented to the British Silent Film Festival Symposium, King's College London, 19 April 2013, discussed the plot of the novel as an exemplar of contemporary pulp fiction novels with a cinema setting. We are grateful to Dr. O'Rourke for sending us a copy of his unpublished paper.

⁶⁵ Detailed in an invoice, 24 October 1922, from the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. to G. C. Coffey, Conference Book Centre, 354 Flinders St., Melbourne. Copy in "Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co." file, National Archives of Australia, A425, 1943/2649. See Figure 1.

⁶⁶ *Australasian* (Melbourne), 20 October 1923, 51.

prolific crime writer under the name Mark Cross. Herbert Parker, who has not been identified, wrote two romance mysteries for Anglo-Eastern, *The Cuckoo Woman* and *The Midnight Lady*. “Rex Ryan” [Evelyn Bradley], a repertory actor who later became a prolific writer of thrillers for Herbert Jenkins under the name R. R. Ryan, had two novels published by Anglo-Eastern: *Midnight Love* under the Ryan pseudonym, and *The Tyranny of Virtue* under the pseudonym, “Noel Despard.”

Willis Jr. took an active role in distributing his books more widely. The company’s books were advertised in the London press, via postcards depicting a cover of one of the “Bree Narran” novels, and in local and overseas trade papers. Either he or his father, using his Singapore connections, placed at least one display advertisement—NOVELS JUST TO HAND—in the *Straits Times*.⁶⁷

An advertisement in the Canadian *Bookseller and Stationer* carried the following blurb for the “novels of Bree Narran, the Australian author with **record sales**”:

The war and its aftermath established a demand for clean, wholesome, virile stories, dealing with Real Life and Real Humanity, not with anaemic slices of vacuous life. It is our business to supply that demand.⁶⁸

The reach of the company’s publications into Australia had unforeseen repercussions. A file in the records of the Department of Trade and Customs in the National Archives of Australia titled “Prohibited Publications—General,” includes a numbered catalogue of publications of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co.⁶⁹ The last numbered book in the catalogue is “Noel Despard”’s *The Tyranny of Virtue*, which suggests that the catalogue was printed shortly after that novel was published in April 1925. With the catalogue is a printed advertisement for the Conference Book Store, 354 Flinders Street, Melbourne, and Skinner’s Book Arcade, 119 Castlereagh Street, Sydney, presumably local distributors for Anglo-Eastern titles.⁷⁰ A prudish member of the public wrote on the advertisement “[i]t is shameful you admit these books into the state!” and sent it, along with the catalogue and advertisements for the firm’s Sexual Science Series and flyers for a translation of Balzac’s *Droll Stories*, to the Department of Trade and Customs, which had legislative responsibility for dealing with prohibited imports.

As a result, in early 1927 twenty-two Anglo-Eastern titles, including several titles in its Sexual Science series,⁷¹ were seized by Customs officials from Skin-

⁶⁷ *Straits Times*, 15 March 1921, 13.

⁶⁸ Full-page advertisement in the *Bookseller and Stationer* (Toronto), 22 June 1922, 2. See Figure 3.

⁶⁹ National Archives of Australia, A425, 1943/2649.

⁷⁰ In addition, the Atlantic Publishing Co. of Elizabeth St., Melbourne, also appears to be an Australian and New Zealand distributor for Anglo-Eastern titles. The company advertised Willis’s *Why Girls Go Wrong* (incorrectly attributing it to “Bree Narran”) in the *New Zealand Truth* of 8 March 1924, urging readers to “write to us for a Catalogue.” See Figure 4 for annotated advertisement.

⁷¹ Willis’s *Wedded Love or Married Misery* [1920], *Sexual Knowledge for the Young Woman* [1921] by J. P. Gair, Thomas Herne’s *Love, Courtship and Marriage* [1922], *Birth Control* [1922] by “Brenda

ner's Book Arcade and forwarded to the Comptroller-General in Melbourne for consideration. The Comptroller-General recommended the banning of *The Painted Woman*; *Mistress or Wife*; *The Wife, the Husband and the Lover* and *The Taint*; and expressed reservations about *Crisp Stories*; *A Woman of Temperament*; *The Dancing Girl*; *Georgette* and *A Woman of Forty*. However, Professor Robert Strachan Wallace,⁷² the chief censor for cinematographic films, recommended releasing the books, although he took the opportunity to observe in his memorandum, "These books are trash."

Willis Jr.'s efforts to expand the business did not last, and by late 1931 the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. was in serious debt. On 4 December 1931, the *London Gazette* reported that the printer, Alexander Smith Mitchell (who traded as the Classic Colour Press of Katesgrove, Reading),⁷³ had presented a petition to the Companies Court for the winding up of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. because of monies owed.⁷⁴ Winding-up orders were issued on 14 December 1931 with creditors to meet on 2 February 1932. Final dividends were paid in two instalments (May 1934 and August 1935) and the liquidator was released in April 1936.

These events, however, did not see the end of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. In June 1932 the following notice appeared in the *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*

Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. (1932) Ltd—capital £2000 in £1 shares; publishers, and in particular to acquire certain copyrights, stereotypes and printers' moulds of books and existing stock from B. F. Hopper, of 254, Woodmansterne Road, S. W. 16. Private Company.⁷⁵

Some four months later the following notice appeared in the trade journal, *The Publishers' Circular*:

The Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. (1932) Ltd, of 15 Cecil Court, W. C. 2, have taken over the business of the company of the same name formerly of Waterloo Road, S. E. 1, and are issuing new editions of their 'Bree Narran' and other well-known fiction.⁷⁶

Barwon" (possibly a pseudonym of W. N. Willis), and *Love Ethics* [1922] by John Hurstcot. All of these titles were cleared.

⁷² Sir Robert Strachan Wallace (1882–1961). Vice Chancellor, University of Sydney. See <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/wallace-sir-robert-strachan-8962>.

⁷³ Classic Colour Press appears to have printed Anglo-Eastern books from at least 1925, for example *The Tyranny of Virtue*.

⁷⁴ The petition was presented on 27 November 1931, "Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co Ltd. Companies Office. Notes, no. 00615 of 1931," National Archives, London.

⁷⁵ *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*, June 1932, 598.

⁷⁶ *The Publishers' Circular and Booksellers' Record* 117 (15 October 1932): 444.

According to the 1936 edition of Clegg's *International Directory of the World's Book Trade*, the managing director of this new incarnation of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. was B. F. Hopper. It is unclear whether Hopper was a creditor of the original company, or simply an opportunist who acquired the company's assets at a discount when it was wound up. His obituary in the *Times* reveals that he was on that newspaper's staff, and was at one time the circulation manager.⁷⁷ He left the *Times* in December 1921 and for some years afterwards, he worked for a wholesale newspaper distribution concern.

Clegg's *Directory* of 1936 indicates that Hopper issued "one general catalogue, and one devoted to sexual science." A copy of the general catalogue was published at the back of *Crisp Stories* vols. 1 and 2, both issued by Anglo-Eastern in 1933. It appears to correspond roughly with the 1925 catalogue that Willis Jr. sent to his distributors in Australia, copies of which were passed on to the Department of Trade and Customs. The 1933 catalogue has 'NEW EDITIONS' on the title page and lists fourteen books by "Bree Narran" and advertises another; plus four novels under a heading "Popular Fiction Series;" two volumes of "Balzac Rare Short Stories" translated by "Bree Narran;" two volumes of *Crisp Stories*: "a collection of the world's best stories translated from the many languages by Bree Narran;" fourteen volumes of short stories by Guy de Maupassant plus two of his novels, all translated by "Bree Narran;" six titles in a "Sexual Science Series;" seven novels by Paul de Kock translated by "Bree Narran;" and eight titles by W. N. Willis headed "Social Science Series."⁷⁸ The Willis titles were all reprints of his books, including his anti-white slave novels.

It is unclear whether all titles listed in the catalogue were actually published. If they were, the publisher did not meet its legal deposit obligations: there are no copies listed in COPAC of four of the "Bree Narran" novels, although three of them are held in Australia, and only five of the at least seven Paul de Kock translations appear to be held in the UK. In addition to those titles listed in the 1933 catalogue, several Anglo-Eastern titles provisionally dated between 1932 and 1935 are listed in the British Library catalogue. These include *Some School-boy Howlers* (1932), C. J. O'Donnell's *Outraged Ulster: why Ireland is rebellious* (1932), Percy E. Hurst's *50 Original Cartoons on Law and Lawyers* (1935), and D. C. Daking's *Jungian Psychology and Modern Spiritual Thought* (1933). There does not appear to be any publishing activity beyond 1935, but there are indications that Hopper kept the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. on the Register at Companies House.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ "Mr. B. F. Hopper," *Times*, 17 April 1957, 13.

⁷⁸ Details from a catalogue in *Crisp Stories*, 1.

⁷⁹ In July 1938 the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. was listed in the *London Gazette* as receiving notice that it would be struck off the register and dissolved unless it provided evidence it was carrying on a business (this usually meant the firm was not submitting annual returns or accounts). The company

Nevertheless, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, another company, the Camden Publishing Co, was publishing the “Bree Narran” novels and the French translations.⁸⁰ These were most likely reprinted using the stereotype plates and printers’ moulds mentioned in the notice in the *British and Colonial Printer and Stationer*.

The relationship between the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. and the Camden Publishing Co. is difficult to unravel. A 1910 letterhead shows that Camden Publishing Company were “Wholesale & Export Booksellers.”⁸¹ The business was first listed in the 1906–1910 edition of the *ECB*, and remained at the same Upper Street Islington address until the early fifties.

W. N. Willis Sr.’s relationship with Camden goes back at least to October 1915 (and probably earlier) when Camden published his *The Taint in the Blood*.⁸² When B. F. Hopper started the new Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. in 1932, he advertised extensively in Camden publications, which might suggest that he was involved in the earlier company and wanted to maintain the relationship with Camden. The fact that Camden was publishing the “Bree Narran” novels and translations in the 1930s and beyond suggests that Hopper sold or leased the copyright to the Anglo-Eastern backlist to Camden.

By the mid thirties, possibly earlier, Camden’s managing director was E. Rose,⁸³ listed in the electoral rolls for 1935 and 1936 as a clerk at 323 Upper Street, Islington, the address given on the Camden imprints. The company was still listed in the 1950 edition of *Clegg’s Register* but a notice in the *London Gazette* indicated that the company was wound up in 1954.

VII

The books of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company are more rather than just post-war cheap pornography as described by Cyril Pearl in his account of Willis in *Wild Men of Sydney*. They may have sported salacious covers, addressed somewhat taboo topics, and would today be regarded as “pulp fiction,” but in the “Bree Narran” novels, there was always a message, whether deliberate or not. The cad and bounder, in the long run, always received his just punishment.

It is also clear that Willis was exploiting and manipulating contemporary fears and prejudices about sex and the East. Given his past career in New South Wales

was listed again in October 1957, following Hopper’s death. The company is not listed in the register of UK publishing firms in the *ECB* after 1935.

⁸⁰ Several of the “Bree Narran” titles listed in COPAC have a 1940s publication date.

⁸¹ Camden Publishing Company Ltd file, Companies House Records, National Archives, London, BT 31/10244/7961.

⁸² In Arnold, and in the *Bibliography of Australian Literature* (see note 1), the novel *Defiance* by “Oliver Wentworth,” published by Camden in 1910 is attributed to W. N. Willis, but this is almost certainly not so, as it has now been established that Willis did not arrive in London until well into 1911.

⁸³ E. Rose is listed as the managing director of Camden in the 1936 edition of *Clegg’s Register* and in the *Author’s and Writer’s Who’s Who* (London: Shaw, 1934).

and the fact that he fathered three children to a much younger woman in London while still legally married to his wife back in Australia, it is highly unlikely that his writings were motivated by concern about the rights of women, but were primarily a cynical attempt to cash in on a topic he knew was saleable. Here Willis was tapping into the demand for cheap paperback fiction suitable for train journeys and other light reading. The books he published formed part of the growth in romance and escapist reading of cheaply priced fiction that Joseph McAleer discusses in his *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950*, where he argues that “the period 1914–1950 ... represents the first time the mass reading public was commercially managed and exploited in a recognizably modern way.”⁸⁴

The British publishers that most closely approximate the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. were the pulp paperback publishers that proliferated in the decade after the Second World War, collectively termed “mushroom” publishers by Steve Holland, the historian of popular literature.⁸⁵ Mushroom publishers were small enterprises that published paperback novels and novelettes with racy titles and bright, gaudy covers, designed to appeal to a predominately male readership.

Both the Anglo-Eastern and Camden publishing companies can be seen as proto-mushroom publishers with many of the same characteristics: for example, the French flavour of much of their output. French obscenity laws were much more relaxed than those in Britain and there was a view that French-flavoured novels were more erotic and would therefore guarantee good sales. French realist writers like Zola, de Kock and de Maupassant contributed to this reputation for immorality and there were numerous English editions of their work. A taste for French romance continued into the twentieth century with translations of the work of Maurice Dekobra and Louis Charles Royer.

In the late 1920s Gramol Publications began to publish French novels by pseudonymous authors such as “Roland Vane” (*Night Haunts of Paris, Tainted*), Henri de France (*Passionate Queen*), Jean Du Crois, Henri Lamonte and Jeanette Revere.⁸⁶ One of the most prolific publishers of this sort of material was Gerald G. Swan Ltd, which, in the 1930s and 1940s, published over sixty novels by “Paul Renin” (a pseudonym of Richard Goyne) as well as similar novels by Ruy du Montesse and the prolific William James Elliott. Elliott’s first Swan publication, the non-fiction *Life Long Sex Harmony* (1939), went through numerous editions and harked back to Anglo-Eastern’s Sexual Science Series.

⁸⁴ Joseph McAleer, *Popular Reading and Publishing in Britain 1914–1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 7.

⁸⁵ Steve Holland, *The Mushroom Jungle: A History of Post War Paperback Publishing* (Westbury, Wiltshire: Zeon Books, 1993). A good visual range of contemporary and later British pulp fiction publishers can be seen at http://www.ashrare.com/pulp_fiction.html.

⁸⁶ Holland, *The Mushroom Jungle*, 23.

Indeed, the combination of romance and crime plots involving naïve English waifs lured to the continent by sophisticated European men, racy titles and colourful covers that characterise much of the output of the mushroom publishers were features of “Bree Narran”’s novels first published decades earlier and reissued right up the late 1940s. If even a fraction of the company’s sales figure of three million for the “Bree Narran” novels is to be believed, she (or he?) is without doubt one of least known but most successful authors with an Australian connection. Be that as it may, the cheap, small-scale, and opportunistic nature of both the Anglo-Eastern and Camden publishing companies sheds some light on a little-known aspect of British publishing between the wars.

Monash University and National Archives of Australia

THE Love Child
A Best Seller.
Over 70,000 copies sold.
Cloth bound. Good bulk.
2/6 Net.

THE Kinema Girl
Sales exceed 45,000 copies.
2/6 Net.

The sales of BREE NARRAN'S Novels run into well over 3,000,000 copies.

It's a Bree Narran!



Booksellers!

Stock the Books on this List: they are sure money-makers.
ORDER NOW ON THIS FORM.

Marriage and Birth Control

BY
Brenda Barwon

The greatest work on this subject yet published.

Sells on sight.

Order your stock now.

Copies	List No.	TITLE.	AUTHOR.	Net Selling Price.	Copies	List No.	TITLE	AUTHOR	Net Selling Price.
	1	One Night	By BREE NARRAN	1/9	53	White Slaves of London			1/6
	2	Three Nights		1/9	54	Wink Slave Market			1/6
	3	Seven Nights		1/9	55	Western Men With Eastern Morals			1/6
	4	A Night and a Day		1/6	56	Should Girls be Told?			1/6
	5	Six Nights Near the Moon		1/6	57	A Girl of London Town			1/6
	6	The Hour of Temptation		1/6	58	White Slaves in a Piccadilly Flat			1/6
	7	Cora Pearl		1/9	59	The Taint			1/9
	8	The Dangerous Mrs. Raymond		1/9	60	Betrayal			1/6
	9	The Kinema Girl		1/9	61	Why Girls Go Wrong			1/6
	10	A Woman of Forty		1/6	62	Anti-Christ in Egypt			1/6
	11	A Woman of Temperament		1/6	63	THE GRIP OF THE VENERAL MICROBE			2/-
	12	The Love Child		1/6					
	13	The Dancing Girl		1/6					
	14	The Right to Motherhood		1/6					
	15	Eve and The Man		1/9					
	16	Eve Out of Eden		1/9					
	82	EVE OUT OF EDEN		2/6	64	Blusy Grey			1/6
	83	THE KINEMA GIRL		2/6	65	The Lady Jockey			1/6
	84	THE LOVE CHILD		2/6					
	29	Short Stories, Volume 1		1/6	17	Cuddl'ums	VALENTINE	2/-	
	30	" " " " " " 2		1/6	18	The Adjusters	JOHN BERNARD	1/9	
	31	" " " " " " 3		1/6	19	A WOMAN OF FIRE	JOHN BERNARD	1/6	
	32	" " " " " " 4		1/6	20	THE NEW RACE OF DEVILS	HERBERT PARKER	1/6	
	33	" " " " " " 5		1/6	21	The Midnight Lady	HERBERT PARKER	1/6	
	34	" " " " " " 6		1/6	22	The Cuckoo Woman	LOUISE HELGERS	1/9	
	35	" " " " " " 7		1/6	23	Further Tabloid Tales	M. LEHANE-WILLIS	1/6	
	36	" " " " " " 8		1/6	24	THE PAINTED WOMAN	M. LEHANE-WILLIS	1/9	
	37	" " " " " " 9		1/6	25	Dean's Rosemary	BOCACIO	3/6	
	38	" " " " " " 10		1/6	66	Decameron	MARGARET QUEEN		
	39	" " " " " " 11		1/6	67	Heptameron	OF NAVARRE	3/6	
	40	" " " " " " 12		1/6	68	Aristotle's Works	ARISTOTLE	3/6	
	41	" " " " " " 12a		1/6	70	Book of Nature	T. FAULKNER, M.D.	2/6	
	42	" " " " " " 14		1/6	69	DROLL STORIES. (Special edition, 40 illus.)	BALZAC	1/6	
	80	A Ladies' Man		1/6	85	MIDNIGHT LOVE	REX RYAN	1/6	
	43	A Woman's Life		1/6	86	THE GIRL WHO CHARMS MEN		2/6	
	27	Crisp Stories, Volume 1		1/6		(Four books in one)			
	28	" " " " " " 2		1/6	87	THE TRYANNY OF VIRTUE	NOEL DESPARD	3/6	
	81	" " " " " " 3		1/6		The above three books are SURE SELLERS			
	26	Rare Stories, Volume 1		1/6					
	79	" " " " " " 2		1/6					
	44	My Neighbour Raymond		1/6					
	45	That Rascal Gustav		1/6					
	46	The Bride of the First Night		1/6					
	47	The Wife, Husband and Lover		1/6					
	48	Cards, Women and Wine		1/6					
	49	Mistress or Wife		1/6					
	50	The Girl with the Three Petticoats		1/6					
	51	Georgette		1/6					
	52	Mildred		1/6					

THE ANGLO-EASTERN PUBLISHING CO., LTD. Name _____
48/50, Waterloo Road, London, S.E.1 Order through your Wholesaler. Address _____

Figure 2: Advertising leaflet detailing Anglo-Eastern publications.
(Reproduced with permission from National Archives of Australia, A425, 1943/2649)

Checklist of Books by W. N. Willis, “Bree Narran,” and Titles Published by the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company

The following checklist has been compiled using two catalogues (1925 and 1933) issued by the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company, the *English Catalogue of Books (ECB)*, the British Library Catalogue (*BL*), COPAC and advertisements in the firm’s publications.

The headings partly follow those used in the 1933 catalogue. The dates given for some of the publications are based on external evidence, some dates are speculative. Almost all of the titles lack publication dates and many are not held by the British Library and nor do they appear in *ECB*.

Books by W. N. Willis

The Life of W. P. Crick (Sydney: W. N. Willis, 1909)

**White Slave Market*. Co-authored with Olive Christian Malvery. (London: Stanley Paul, 1912)⁸⁷

The 1925 and 1933 catalogues do not acknowledge Malvery as co-author.

Bluey Grey: a Sport Abroad, a Racing Romance (London: Simpkin, 1912)

What Germany Wants (London: Stanley Paul, 1912)

**The White Slaves of London* (London: Stanley Paul, 1912)

According to *ECB*, not actually published until January 1913. US edition: (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1913); German edition (as *Die Mädchen Fallen*), (Leipzig: Heinrich Finck Verlag, 1914).

**Western Men with Eastern Morals* (London: Stanley Paul, 1913)

**Why Girls Go Wrong: How the White Slave Gangs Work* (London: Miller and Co. [printers], 1913)

White Slaves in a Piccadilly Flat (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1914)

White Slaves of Toil: How Women and Children are Sweated (London: Pearson, 1914)

The Life of Lena: a Girl of London Town (London: John Long, 1914)

The Crime of Silence About the Hidden Plague (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1914)

Anti-Christ in Egypt? (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1914)

The Kaiser and His Barbarians (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1914)

**The Taint in the Blood* (London: Camden Publishing Co., 1915)

Reissued as *The Taint* by Anglo-Eastern, ca. 1925.

Luvvy Muvver: Letters from 'er dorter, Miss Lizer Jane (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1916)

**Should Girls be Told* (London: Laurie, 1917)

The Grip of the Venereal Microbe (London: Laurie, 1918)

**Wedded Love or Married Misery* (London: The Author, 1920)

**The Lady Jockey* (London: Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co., 1922)

⁸⁷Titles preceded by an asterisk were reissued in 1933 as part of a “Social Science” series.

Betrayal (London: Anglo-Eastern/Camden Publishing Co., nd)

The only copy listed on COPAC is 1949 Camden edition but it is listed in the 1925 and 1933 catalogues.

Novels by “Bree Narran”

All published by the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. and most, if not all, reissued by the Camden Publishing Company in the late 1930s and 1940s.

One Night (1919)

Three Nights (1919)

Seven Nights (1919)

The Kinema Girl (1919)

Cora Pearl: the Lady of the Pink Eyes (1919)

The Dancing Girl (before October 1922)

The Right to Motherhood (before October 1922)

A Woman of Forty (before October 1922)

A Woman of Temperament (before October 1922)

The four titles immediately above were listed on a 24 October 1922 Anglo-Eastern Publishing Co. invoice (see note 65) and also, along with the other 12 “Bree Narran” titles, in the 1925 and 1933 catalogues.

Eve and the Man (1923)

Eve Out of Eden (1923)

The Love Child (1924)

Above three titles listed in *ECB* only as cheap editions, so possibly first published earlier.

A Night and a Day (ca. 1923–1924)

Six Nights Near the Moon (ca. 1923–1924)

The Hour of Temptation (ca. 1923–1924)

All three advertised in volumes of Guy de Maupassant Short Stories received by the *BL* in 1924.

The Dangerous Mrs Raymond (1924–1925)

Listed in the 1925 Anglo-Eastern catalogue. *The Gay Woman* is listed among the novels of “Bree Narran” on the title page of *Eve and the Man* (1923) but no copies on COPAC and title is not listed in the 1925 or 1933 catalogues.

Popular Fiction Series

“Valentino,” *Cuddl’ums* (1922)

Herbert Parker, *The Midnight Lady* (1922)

M. Lehane Willis, *Dean’s Rosemary* (ca. 1922)

Advertised in *Cuddl’ums* (1922).

M. Lehane Willis, *The Painted Woman* (probably ca. 1922)

Both the above listed in the 1925 catalogue. In the 1933 catalogue the author is given as “N. Lehane-Willis.”

Balzac’s Rare Short Stories, translated by “Bree Narran”

Rare Stories, vol. 1 (1924)

Rare Stories, vol. 2 (1924–1925)

Rare Stories is advertised in vol. 8 of Guy de Maupassant's *Short Stories* received by the *BL* in 1924 and both volumes are listed in the 1925 catalogue. Reissued in 1933.

***Crisp Stories* by “Bree Narran”: A Collection of the World’s Best Short Stories, translated from the French by “Bree Narran”**

Crisp Stories, vol. 1 (before October 1922)

Crisp Stories, vol. 2 (before October 1922)

Crisp Stories, vol. 3 (1925, possibly earlier)

Listed in the 1925 catalogue.

Guy de Maupassant’s Short Stories, translated by “Bree Narran”

A Woman’s Life (ca. 1920)

See note 48.

Short Stories, series nos. 1–14 (14 volumes) (1923–1924)

BL has 13 parts issued over 1923–1924 and Cambridge University 12 parts issued [1923?].

Reissued in 1933.

A Ladies’ Man. Translated from the French unexpurgated manuscript by “Bel Ami” (ca. 1925)

Listed in the 1925 catalogue.

The Novels of Paul de Kock, translated from the French by “Bree Narran”

Mistress or Wife (before October 1922)

Georgette (before October 1922)

The Girl With Three Petticoats (ca. 1924)

My Neighbour Raymond (ca. 1924)

That Rascal Gustave (ca. 1924)

Cards, Women and Wine (ca. 1924)

Madeleine (ca. 1924)

The Bride (ca. 1924)

All of the above are advertised in Guy de Maupassant’s *Short Stories*, no. 7, received by the *BL* in July 1924. They are also in the 1925 and 1933 catalogues.

The Wife, Husband and Lover (1924–1925)

Listed in the 1925 catalogue.

Sexual Science Series

J. P. Gair, *What A Young Women Ought to Know* (1921)

Reissued in 1933 as *Sexual Knowledge for the Young Woman*.

J. P. Gair, *What a Young Man Ought to Know* (1921)

Reissued in 1933 as *Sexual Knowledge for the Young Man*.

J. P. Gair, *Sexual Knowledge as Applied to Motherhood* (1921)

Reissued in 1933 as *The Control of Motherhood*.

Thomas Herne, *Love, Courtship and Marriage* (1922)

John Hurstcot, *Love Ethics: Sex and the Divine* (1922)

"Brenda Barwon," *Marriage and Birth Control* (1922)

Possibly a pseudonym by W. N. Willis or Mercy Lehane-Willis or possibly jointly written.

Thomas Faulkner, *The Book of Nature* (ca. 1925)

Listed in the 1925 catalogue.

Additional Titles Listed in either the 1925 or 1933 Catalogue

"John Bernard" [Annie O'Meara de Vic Beamish], *The New Race of Devils* (1921)

Herbert Parker, *The Cuckoo Woman: A Powerful Novel* (1922)

Louise Heilgers, *Further Tabloid Tales* (ca. 1922)

First published London: Dryden Publishing Co, 1918.

"John Bernard" [Annie O'Meara de Vic Beamish], *A Woman of Fire* (1923)

Thomas Herne, *The Illusions and Realities of Love* (1924)

"Noel Despard" [Evelyn Bradley], *Tyranny of Virtue* (1925)

The publisher here is given as "N. F. Willis" with the same address as that of the Anglo-Eastern Publishing Company.

"Rex Ryan" [Evelyn Bradley], *Midnight Love* (ca. 1925)

"Valentine" [Archibald Thomas Pechey], *The Adjusters* (ca. 1925)

The Girl Who Charms Men (ca. 1925)

Described in the catalogue as four books in one.

Boccaccio, *The Decameron* (ca. 1925)

Margaret, *Queen of Navarre, Heptameron* (ca. 1925)

Aristotle, *Works* (ca. 1925)

Balzac, *Droll Stories* (ca. 1925)

The above four titles were possibly Camden Publishing Company imprints distributed by Anglo-Eastern.

Other

Arthur Wolseley D'Ombrian, *Boomerang Verses* (1924)

Cover by Will Dyson.

C. J. O'Donnell, *Outraged Ulster: Why Ireland is Rebellious with an Introductory Letter to the Right Hon Viscount Craigavon* (1932)

D. C. Daking, *Jungian Philosophy and Modern Spiritual Thought* (1933)

Some Schoolboy Howlers (1934)

Percy E. Hurst, *50 Original Cartoons on Law & Lawyers* (1935)

The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk, or the Hidden Secrets of a Nun's Life in a Convent Exposed (nd)

Reprint of a scandal story from the 1830s. Several copies listed on COPAC.

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Figure 3: Advertisement for the Anglo-Eastern list as it had been established by mid-1922. (Bookseller and Stationer, June 1922, 2.)

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Figure 4: Annotated advertisement (see p. 210) for Australian sales of Anglo-Eastern publications (Reproduced with permission from National Archives of Australia, A425, 1943/2649.)