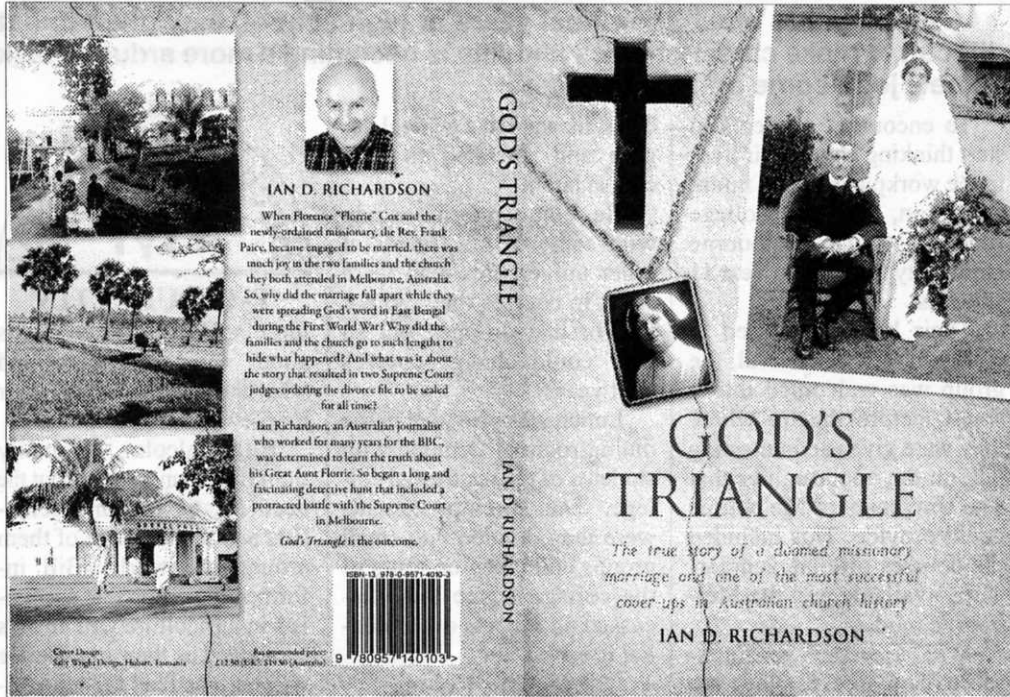


Book Review:



“God’s Triangle”

by Ian Richardson

People who research their family history are always aware that delving into the past may uncover an event that at the time was thought not suitable for the ears of children, and has been lost to descendants.

So it was for Ian Richardson when he investigated the life of his great aunt, Florrie Cox.

Born in Wonthaggi, Ian grew up in Charlton, where his parents owned the “Charlton Tribune”. He joined the family business, but some years later, when his widowed mother sold the business, he took up broadcast journalism with 3BO, then 3AW.

In 1968, when he and his wife Rosemary visited London, he was offered a job with the BBC, which led to almost 30 years on its staff.

Both Ian and Rosemary have a keen interest in their family history, which led them to Florrie’s story.

Florrie was a member of a very strict Baptist family, who were very pleased when she decided to become a missionary and go to Bengal, India, to help the young people and convert them to Christianity.

Florrie became engaged to another missionary, Frank Paice, and followed him to India, where they were mar-

ried in Calcutta in 1914. One of Florrie’s bridesmaids was Olga Johnston, a fellow missionary.

After two years of dedicated work in difficult conditions, Frank and Florrie, accompanied by Olga Johnston, had a holiday, and in 1917 Olga returned to Melbourne on furlough, at the end of which it was announced that she had resigned from the service and would not return to India.

In September 1918 came the bombshell, when a meeting of the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission announced the resignation of the Rev. Frank Paice, with “profound sorrow at the unhappy event which has led to this action.”

Frank and Florrie returned to Melbourne, and soon after, their marriage was annulled. When this became absolute, Frank married Olga Johnston.

Florrie spent some time with family members, but became very depressed, and eventually mental problems led to her admittance to the

Mont Park mental hospital, where she died in 1950.

Frank was employed by a prominent engineering firm, and became a member of the Nunawading Council, working hard for his community, and was elected Mayor. When he died, a eulogistic obituary did not mention that he had been a missionary.

Annulment of the marriage indicated that the marriage had not been consummated, and Ian’s attempt to discover why met a brick wall. No reference had been made in any of Melbourne’s newspapers, and court proceedings were blocked.

Great persistence by Ian and Rosemary led to the discovery that Florrie had a rare condition which had led to this result.

“God’s Triangle” subtitled “the true story of a doomed missionary marriage and one of the most successful cover-ups in Australia’s church history” is most unusual and interesting, and certainly bears out the adage that “truth is stranger than fiction”.