



## Outside: The Life of C. T. J. Adamson

*Michael Bird*

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Charles Thomas Johnston ('Bill') Adamson was born on 17 January 1901, between the proclamation of Australian Federation on 1 January and the first federal election in March. His father was an Australian surgeon living in England and his mother was from the Scottish aristocracy. Despite an excellent public-school education, Bill turned away from privilege. After learning the wool trade, he emigrated to Australia in 1923 to work with a shearing team. He spent the next few years doing the rounds of the sheds in Queensland. The year 1926 was a bad one on the land and after a period cutting cane in far north Queensland, Adamson left for Papua (an Australian Territory since 1906) to try his luck on the goldfields. He prospected with variable success for the next decade, often the only European, many days from assistance in precipitous terrain. In 1935 he joined the Papuan Government service as one of Sir Hubert Murray's 'Outside Men', and achieved a measure of fame for his part in the epic eight month - and completely bloodless - Bamu-Purari Patrol into the Southern Highlands. This was the longest exploration in Papuan history. He then helped to open the Lake Kutubu Patrol Post in the Southern Highlands, where he spent two continuous years involved in the business of 'first contact' on a daily basis. At the beginning of World War II, Bill joined the RAN and served first on minesweepers in the English Channel and Western Approaches, then a corvette in the Indian Ocean. After Japan entered the war, Bill returned to Papua, where he served as beachmaster at Oro Bay, and in command of a survey ship assisting the Allied offensive in New Guinea. In the final year of the war he assumed command of HMAS Taipan, one of the 'cloak and dagger' snake-boats of the Services Reconnaissance Department. After demobilisation he returned to Papua in the government service, and later as a plantation owner, before retiring to Cooktown in 1964.

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