



# **New Guinea Engineer: The Memoirs of Les Bell, Mbe**

*Gillian Heming Shadbolt, Les Bell*

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World War II Royal Australian Air Force Flying Officer Les Bell, MBE recounts startling tales of settlement in Northern Queensland, the equatorial coconut and gold empires of German and Australian New Guinea, and the country's island archipelagos. In 1914 Les, aged 10, won his first Scout badge for collecting sugar bags for use in WW1 but he valued most his introduction to Morse Code. As a radio amateur (ham) Les maintained contact with operators around the world. He won ham contest certificates, among others, from Stampede City, China, Japan and the Napier Women Operators Club in New Zealand. The American Radio Relay League Inc. honoured him with their highest A1 Operator Certificate. He served in radar units in the Pacific war and won his MBE at the Battle of New Britain. In the war Les had killed Japanese but, in the peace that followed, he and his canny wife Bertha booked a tour of Japan and stayed 18 weeks. In 1945 Les returned to Kavieng and cleared away daisy-cutter bombs among the detritus of war. Retiring to Whitsunday Passage Les found himself among settlers of the now burgeoning tourist sun-mecca of Airlie Beach. As the new Scout District Commissioner, he officiated in welcomes to the then Queensland Head Scout Governor Henry Abel Smith, and Lady May. Les died -- on 11 December 2000 -- just before his 96th birthday.

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