

AUSTRALIAN WOMEN FACT FILE

MARIE LOUISE HAMILTON MACK

(1870 – 1935)

Author, Journalist and First Woman War Correspondent

1870	Born 10 October in Hobart, Tasmania
1896	Married John Creed, a barrister from Ireland. Her first novel <i>The World is Round</i> published in London
1897-98	<i>Teens and Girls Together</i> published in Sydney
1901	Left husband and travelled to London
1902	<i>An Australian Girl in London</i> published and well received
1904–1910	Lived in Florence, Italy, editing a magazine called the <i>Italian Gazette</i>
1914	First woman war correspondent in World War I
1915	<i>A Woman's Experiences in the Great War</i> published
1916–1918	Returned to Australia and toured the country speaking of her war experiences
1919–1930	Lectured in Pacific Islands, New Zealand, and Australia
1924	Married Allen Illingworth Leyland, a New Zealand ANZAC
1935	Died 23 November in Mosman, Sydney

Marie Louise Hamilton Mack, who was always known as Louise, was the first daughter and the seventh of thirteen children of Jemima (James) and the Rev Hans Hamilton Mack, a Wesleyan minister. Her father's career took the family from the Braidwood goldfields, to Tasmania, South Australia, and back to New South Wales, where they finally settled in Sydney in 1882. Louise was educated by her mother, a governess, and at Sydney Girls High School where one of her classmates was Agnes Bennett (see Fact File) and her best friend was Ethel Turner (author of *Seven Little Australians*). Although Louise and Ethel were rival editors at school, Louise editing *The Gazette* and Ethel *The Iris*, they remained friends for most of their lives.

After finishing school Louise worked briefly as a governess, but, writing prolifically, she achieved immediate success with her stories and poems when, with her first poem, she became the protégée of both the Editor and the chief critic of the influential Bulletin. In 1898 she was invited to join the Bulletin staff to write the regular column 'Sydney Woman's Letter' under the name of 'Gouli Gouli'. Her first novel *The World is Round* had already been published in England in 1896, the year she married Irish barrister, John Percy Creed; Ethel Turner was her bridesmaid.

Always restless and looking for excitement, Louise left her husband and went to London in 1901 where she continued to write several novels including *An Australian Girl in London*, which received enthusiastic reviews. With her fertile imagination and ability to write quickly, she compromised herself by writing serials, but she had to support herself and in this way she made a lot of money. The Harmsworth Press, for whom she also worked as a journalist, later published them as novels.

Restlessness took over again however, and in 1904 she went to live in Florence in Italy, her *new spiritual home*, where she edited the English language *Italian Gazette*

for six years, and wrote *Children of the Sun* (set in Sydney) which was well received in London and Florence and by the ever-faithful Bulletin critic in Sydney.

Back in London writing serials when World War I broke out, Louise persuaded her employer, Lord Northcliffe of the Harmsworth Press to ignore officialdom and send her to Belgium in 1914 to report for the Evening News and the Daily Mail. She witnessed the German bombardment and occupation of Antwerp, avoiding arrest by disguising herself as a maid and stubbornly remaining after everyone else had fled. After several months she managed to escape to Holland, disguised as a peasant, then back to England via Dunkirk. Her novel *A Woman's Experiences in the Great War* was published in 1915, and during the last two years of the war Louise toured Australia lecturing on her war experiences to help raise funds for the Red Cross Society.

With her love of adventure and travel and her vivid imagination, Louise was only too happy to work in association with the Department of Education and the Good Film League of New South Wales, lecturing in the Pacific Islands and New Zealand between 1919 and 1930 and touring Australia with travel talks and films for schools. In 1924, Louise married much younger Allen Illingworth Leyland, a New Zealand ANZAC, who had been badly gassed in France. He died eight years later.

Life was more difficult now, as Louise was becoming more and more eccentric, but she had two more novels published (*Teens Triumphant* and *Maiden's Prayer*) and wrote a column for the new Women's Weekly magazine. Most of her novels are light romances drawing, often rather extravagantly, on her experiences and impressions of Europe and Australia.

She died on 23 November 1935 at Mosman of cerebro-vascular disease, leaving no possessions. She was described as *fluffy like a chicken, fair, pretty, extroverted, audacious, unpredictable, a genuine Bohemian who chose a life of adventure and insecurity*. The Bohemian achieved her wish: *Life was what I wanted*.

Louise's sister Amy Mack (1896–1939) was a children's author and published fourteen collections of bushland stories including of *A Bush Calendar* (1909), *Bushland Stories and Waterside Stories* (1910), *Scribbling Sue and Other Stories* (1913).

A Selection of Published Works

Novels

- *The World is Round 1896
- Teens 1897 (school memories)
- Girls Together 1898 (school memories)
- An Australian Girl in London 1902
- Children of the Sun 1904
- A Woman's Experiences in the Great War 1915
- Teens Triumphant 1933 (school memories)
- Maiden's Prayer 1934

Poems

- Dreams in Flower 1901 – reprinted as A Southern Garland 1904

Sources

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Perry, M (ed) *Chambers Biographical Dictionary* Chambers 1997
*Phelan, N *The Romantic Lives of Louise Mack* University of Queensland Press 1991
Wilde, W, Hooton, J & Andrews, B *The Oxford Companion to Australian Literature*
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[http://oldpoetry.com/authors/Louise %20Mack](http://oldpoetry.com/authors/Louise%20Mack)

*Held in JSNWL

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