STELLA PRIDAY & ELIZA ROWAN
teenage eloper   witness to a scandal

Stella Priday lived with her mother in rented rooms at 42 Jolimont Terrace, Jolimont, *(EMHS)*

Eliza Rowan, *(family collection)*

Stella Muriel Priday

Living with her mother in rented rooms at 42 Jolimont Terrace, East Melbourne when she enlisted

Eloped aged 15 with Sidney Priday, a 32 year old lodger in her mother's boarding house in 1901; married him in Sydney en route to China

Arrested weeks later with her husband in Townsville and charged with vagrancy

Left a widow when her husband Sidney committed suicide before his trial for abduction

Kept her married name Priday throughout her life; wrote 'widow' on her enlistment form

Trained as a nurse at the Children's Hospital and the Women's Hospital in Melbourne

Enlisted in 1917, the only member of her immediate family to do so

Served on the Hospital Ship Kanowna on a round trip to England to bring invalided troops back to Australia in 1917–18

After the war worked in the Repatriation Department in Melbourne where she won the 'cordial appreciation' of doctors, nursing staff and soldiers

Died accidentally in 1931 at her mother's home in Hawthorn, aged 45.

A ROMANTIC ELOPEMENT.
SUICIDE OF THE HUSBAND.

The abduction of Stella Muriel Herford, a Richmond girl, aged 15, by a young man named Sydney Priday, has had a tragic and romantic ending. Information reached the Melbourne police authorities yesterday that Priday, who had been arrested at Townsville on a charge of abduction at the instance of the girl's mother, had committed suicide by poisoning himself.

A few weeks ago Priday, who was employed in Melbourne as a traveller for a whisky firm, disappeared from the house of Mrs. Herford, where he was boarding, taking the girl with him. They went to Sydney, and then took a passage to Townsville, where they were arrested, Priday being charged with abduction and Stella Herford with vagrancy. It was learned that the couple had been married in Sydney, but as Mrs. Herford wished the case to be proceeded with steps were taken to have Priday extradited. He raised the objection that the proceedings were paltry and frivolous, and the hearing was adjourned, bail being allowed. On Monday, however, he took an overdose of morphia, and died yesterday without recovering consciousness.

Stella Priday's elopement was reported in the press, *(Argus, 29.5.1901, p6)*

Eliza Rowan

Born in Nagambie in 1885, one of at least nine children of Lee Rowan, a small farmer, and his wife Margaret (nee Davies)

Like most of her siblings, left home after her father's death in 1899 in search of employment

Trained as a nurse at Perth Hospital, then returned to Victoria to join her sisters who lived in East Melbourne

Joined the Australian Army Nursing Service in 1917, one of three siblings who enlisted

Wore a uniform very likely made for her by her sisters, a dressmaker and a white worker

Served in India from July 1917, at first nursing seriously ill troops from Mesopotamia (Iraq) in Bombay (Mumbai)

Transferred to 34 Welsh General Hospital, a 3 000 bed hospital in Deolali, a hill station, nursing mainly Turkish prisoners of war

Endured a difficult time at the hospital when six Australian nurses were accused but finally exonerated of immoral activities with Turkish prisoners and British troops

Returned to Australia in 1919

Continued nursing after the war, at times in repatriation hospitals

Died in Dromana, Victoria in 1970 aged 85.

Eliza Rowan's uniform, probably made by her seamstress sisters in East Melbourne, *(family collection)*

Stella Priday served on the Hospital Ship Kanowna, seen here unloading patients at Port Melbourne, 1916, *(AWM CO1070)*

Henrietta Rowan (?), dressmaker, *(family collection)*

Gone to War as Sister
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