

# Arthur Alexander John FORD

## Arthur Alexander John FORD

( late of St James Ave, Glebe )

New South Wales Police Force

Regd. # ?

Rank: Constable

Stations: Bathurst, Grenfell, Petersham

Service: From ? to 19 December 1927.  
Went onto sick report on 14 December 1927

Awards: ?

Born: ?

Died on: Monday 19 December 1927 about  
10am

Cause: Murder / Suicide – firearm

Event location: Leichhardt

Age: 49

Funeral date: Wednesday 21 December

1927

Funeral location: ?

Buried at: Presbyterian Section,  
Rookwood Cemetery

[alert\_yellow]ARTHUR is NOT mentioned on the Police Wall of Remembrance[/alert\_yellow] \*NEED MORE INFO

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**Funeral location:**

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Arthur Alexander John Ford died 19/12/1927 aged 49 from self inflicted gun shot wound to the head. He lived in Glebe with his wife and was stationed at Petersham at the time.

He shot **Mrs Florence Laws** in a lane way off **Norton St, Leichhardt** close to Parramatta Road. Mrs Laws lived in **Stanmore**.

The inquest stated that she was shot twice. Other accounts said that 5 shots were fired. Fords wife stated that he had 'troubles' following fractures to the base of his skull and above his left eye (not known if they were job related) and suffered fits of violence.

A couple of letters were **not** admitted into evidence but it was noted that Ford loved his wife.

Death is due to **temporary insanity**.

The information came out after the inquest. Unbeknown to **Mrs**

**Ford** maybe until his final day(s) Ford had '**known**' Mrs Laws for some time. In one of the letters that was not read at the inquest he professes his love for his wife and said to her 'you know all' I think meaning he told her of Mrs Laws.

The letter that **Mrs Laws** wrote told of her deep love for Ford and just wanted to be with him. It would appear that on the day of their deaths, **she** had a dental appointment in Norton St, Leichhardt and she said to the dentist "I have a friend waiting outside".

A friend says that he would hear the voice of his very young daughter who had died 2 years previously asking him to play a particular tune on the pianola (perhaps due to the affects of his head injuries).

Now comes the finale. He is buried in the Presbyterian section of Rookwood Cemetery. A report in the press has it that just as they finished the readings over his coffin, the coffin of Mrs Laws passed by and she was buried "a few yards" from Ford.

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Northern Standard ( Darwin )                      **Tuesday 20 December 1927**  
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### **STANMORE SHOOTING**

**Sydney, Monday.**

Mrs. **Florence Ellen Laws**, of **Percival Road, Stanmore**, wife of a **master builder**, was shot dead in a lane off **Norton Street, Leichhardt**, yesterday **morning**, following a quarrel with **Constable Arthur Alexander John Ford**, of Petersham. The policeman is alleged to have **killed** Mrs. Laws and to have turned the revolver on himself. He also died. Ford **fired five shots**, **four** of which took effect on the **woman**, who died instantly. Ford was also married. When his wife heard, of the tragedy she collapsed.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/48032233#pstart3153593>

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The Age

**20 December 1927**

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## WOMAN SHOT FOUR TIMES.

### Constable's Determined Act.

#### Suicide Follows Murder.

SYDNEY, Monday. — A sensational shooting affair, which resulted in the death of a man and woman, occurred this morning at Leichhardt, when Florence Ellen Laws, 37 years, of Stanmore, was shot with a revolver by Constable Arthur Alexander John Ford, of the Petersham police station, who afterwards shot himself.

Mrs. Laws had been attending a local dentist, and had left the parlors only a few moments, when the dentist heard a succession of shots. He rushed to the spot, and found a number of people congregating round the lane entrance at the back of a small house in Norton-street.

The actual shooting does not appear to have been witnessed by anyone, but Norman Miller, a plasterer who was engaged at a house in Norton-street, said he and a workmate heard a man and woman arguing in the lane. Suddenly the voices were raised, and they then heard the woman start to cry. Screams then came from her, followed by the sound of revolver shots. There was then an interval of silence, after which another shot was heard. The men rushed to the spot and found Constable Ford, dressed in plain clothes, and a woman lying in the lane. A doctor was summoned, but the woman died just as he arrived. The man was still living when the police came, but he died in a hospital a little later without regaining consciousness.

Constable Ford was not on duty at the time of the shooting. He had been ill for some time, and his fellow officers reported to-day that he had been worried on account of the recent death of his mother. He had been heard to state that he intended to do away with himself. Mrs. Laws was the wife of a carrier, who resided at Stanmore, and was a very handsome woman. Constable Ford, who was 49 years of age, was a very powerfully built man, being over 6 feet 1 inch in height. He was married, and lived at Glebe.

When Mrs. Ford heard of the tragedy she collapsed. The husband of the dead woman was also amazed at the shooting. By a singular coincidence, it was stated that he drove past the lane a few moments after the tragedy, but was not aware at the time that it had taken place.

Altogether six shots were fired, and three of them struck Mrs. Laws in the chest, while a fourth penetrated the abdomen. The fifth struck the wall, and the last shot evidently accounted for Constable Ford, by whose side the revolver was found.



deal about other things. His mother had died and he mourned her passing. But there was more. And his thoughts turned to a little home in **Percival-road, Stanmore**, and to a little woman who lived there with her husband and her family.

**Constable Arthur Ford** and **Mrs. Florence Laws** were very firm friends and probably more, if the letters were penned by her, then they were lovers – passionately enamored. In her Stanmore home an astonished husband and father grieves at almost incredible news. Reddened, tear-stained eyes tell of the anguish of three sons, the youngest about 15, and of a pretty daughter. Their mother was her usual bright and cheery self on Monday morning. She left home, trim, petite, dark and well dressed and called at the grocery store just around the corner in Parramatta road. She left and walked smartly along Parramatta-road to Norton-street, where she went to the dental surgery of **Dentist C. G. Everingham**.

She was well-known there as a genial, lovable and striking woman, with a radiant personality and an unfailingly bright outlook on life. The adventure of existence was real to her. She revelled in it, and she had the happy knack of making others feel that life is worth while. At the surgery she submitted a plate to be repaired. It had been broken— by being dropped on to the floor, she explained. It was broken in such a way that a blow on her mouth might have conceivably been the cause. Only a few minutes she had been in the surgery, chatting away, when she excused herself by saying that a friend was waiting outside for her. The pair spoke on the pavement, and he walked along with her about ten yards, leading the way into a little dead end laneway between two houses facing Norton-street.

There the man, 49 years of age, and the woman, who was 12 years his junior, but who looked only 30, had a conversation which will never be known. Something was worrying Ford, and he told her about it.



Was there another man, – apart altogether from the husband? Or did he want her to be his own, and give up her home and children? The Coroner will he faced with a difficult task in elucidating this.

Whatever the discussion, they disagreed. Ford spoke plainly and bluntly.

The woman sensed danger and wanted to get away. In a frenzy he grasped her and tore her clothing. Then she saw the deadly service revolver being drawn out. There was one awful second of realisation. She screamed. In a frightful tattoo five shots barked out in rapid succession, tearing into her body on their work of destruction. The bullets emerged and bespattered the wall. She crumpled up and, with a little murmuring cry, fell dead, the red blood of life pouring from her, staining the green grass that grew along the wall at the side of the lane.

Without any hesitation Ford turned the revolver on himself. Just one shot. It was aimed true, and it seared through his head and brain. He was breathing still when horror-stricken people rushed to the laneway, but he died after being hurried away towards hospital.

Six shots had been fired. Two lives were taken. And a ruptured romance the cause of it all. Just what they were to each other is the problem that at once presents itself. The wife of Ford, attached and devoted to him, was in a state of collapse when police officers had told her the facts of the tragedy.

The husband of Mrs. Laws could shed little light on the matter beyond saying that he had met Ford, had, in fact, been introduced to him by his wife, who told him that Ford had helped her with a punctured tyre one day. Patrolling Parramatta-road, the stalwart constable must have met the woman in difficulties with her car. She drove herself about and had been a motorist for years, having in her home no lack of anything she desired; good clothes, jewellery, a car, and

seemingly no lack of ready cash. Her husband is a master carrier, partner in a business concern. Whatever their association was it must have been heart whole. If the batch of letters found on the dead man came from the woman. Mr. Laws told the police that the writing was like that of his wife. Many of the screeds were on red ruled foolscap paper. Most had been posted in Sydney, and some in Annandale, but not one bore a signature except the crosses, crosses, crosses.

Sometimes the mystery she who wrote them would add a cross or two to the back of the letter for good measure. 'My Own Dearest Love,' was the favored form of introduction. Then the screed went on to messages of burning affection. "I'm sitting all alone thinking of my sweetheart," read one. "I've been doing that all day. I've never been deceitful to you since I've known you. . ." and more like that. "I feel I must see you before I go to bed at night, and in the morning I wake up at four or five and think of my loved one . ." One letter was apparently in reply to a criticism levelled regarding attendance at a dance, or possibly to forestall criticism. "I went to a dance last night," wrote the mystery woman of the letters. "I danced with only one person all night, and I was wishing that you were with me . . ." And then followed fervent passages addressed to "Dear Sweetheart" speaking of lovely kisses and declaring that if he ever tired of her it would kill her. But apparently, if Mrs. Laws was the writer, poor Ford grew anything but tired of her. His passion seemed to transcend all reason, all restraints. Two of the letters in the batch are particularly significant regarding an obviously clandestine association, and the difficulties of avoiding detection. One letter, with no other date than "Sunday, 5 p.m.," I read: "My Own Dearest Love,— I got your letter in the box this morning, sweetheart, at ten-past six, early for Sunday morning. I tried to keep awake on Saturday night, so I could hear you pass, but sleep overtook me. I woke about four o'clock this morning, and never went to sleep after thinking of you, darling, and of the happy

hours we spent together. My Dear Arthur, you still seem to doubt me that I love you. I wish you would not think that. I have proved, dear, how much I do LOVE YOU, and I will never, never give you up. I read your sweet letter over and over again, and loved it. I was thinking of you out in the cold on Saturday night at the dogs. Darling, you must have nearly frozen. Did you ring here about 9.30? Somebody rang, and I thought it might have been you. Somebody else answered the 'phone, and there was no answer. If you ring me on Tuesday let it be after 4. G. goes then. All my love and thoughts till I see my darling. X X X X X x F.L. x x xxx The F.L., thinly traced in a multitude of kisses, seems to have been the only attempt at signature. Both letters were capitals.

Another letter spoke of the suspicions that had been raised by the association of the writer and the Constable.

Dated only 'Sunday,' in much the same way as the other, it read:— My Own Dearest Love,— I've been thinking of you, love, since I saw you yesterday. You shouldn't have come over to the car to speak to me after what I told you in the morning. I was that upset I didn't know what I was talking about. Arthur, dear, you ought to have a little consideration for me when you know how I've been talked about. I Just feel I could clear a thousand miles away. Darling, when you see the little kid, N, I mean, don't ask about me. I will tell you why when I see you. I will try and see you on Wednesday at lunch-time. I will drop you a note before then, sweetheart. All my love till I see you, dear. Then followed those little crosses that mean kisses — thirteen of them. An unlucky number !

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/168681165?searchTerm=lorence%20laws&searchLimits=l-decade=192||||l-year=1927||||l-month=12#pstart16113201>

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**LEICHHARDT TRAGEDY.**

**CONSTABLE "UNDOUBTEDLY INSANE."**

**CORONER'S VERDICT.**

" There cannot be the slightest doubt that Ford was suffering from some temporary insanity, " said the Acting City.

Coroner (Mr. Flynn) at the conclusion yesterday of an inquiry into the death, on the morning of December 19, of Arthur Alexander John Ford, aged 49 years, a police constable, stationed at Petersham, and Mrs. Florence Ellen Laws, aged 37 years, of Percival-road, Stanmore, in a lane off Norton-street, Leichhardt.

The evidence was to the effect that Ford, after a quarrel with Mrs. Laws, drew his **service revolver**, and fired **two shots** at her, killing her instantly. He then turned the weapon on himself, inflicting a wound in the side of the head, from the effects of which he died a few minutes **after admission** to the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Summing up the evidence, Mr. Flynn said the **letters** left behind by **Ford** showed that he regarded his **wife** with deep affection. All the evidence indicated that he was subject to an **increasing mania** for some time before his death, and the tragedy had occurred in one of his fits of violence.

**Linda Beatrice Ford**, wife of the constable, said that he had suffered, some considerable time before the occurrence, two fractures of the skull, one at the base and the other over the left eye. Shortly before the tragedy, he had continually complained of **gnawing under** the points of fracture. Witness had also noticed a change in his **mental disposition**. One night, seated at the pianola, he had asked for the roll "Rock

of Ages," stating: "Margery is calling me to play it." Margery, witness explained, was an **adopted daughter**, who had been dead two years. On **December 18** Ford told witness that he had a confession to make, and spoke of a woman named **Florrie**. Ford was perfectly sober when he left home on the morning of the tragedy. He was not a heavy drinker.

At this stage a letter was produced, and objected to by **counsel** for the **relatives**. In upholding the objection, Mr. Flynn said Ford was obviously insane when he wrote it. It was addressed in very affectionate terms to his wife. Another letter, found on the dead man, was not admitted, the Coroner explaining that it was a letter, couched in affectionate terms, from a certain person to Ford.

The Coroner found, that Mrs. Laws died from the effects of bullet wounds inflicted on her by Ford whilst he was suffering from some temporary mental aberration, and that Ford died from wounds **self-inflicted** whilst in the same condition of mind.

Mr. **Sproule** (of Messrs. R. D. Meagher, Sproule, and Co.) appeared for the **relatives** of **Ford**; Mr. Thomas Green for the relatives of Mrs. Laws; and Inspector Horsell for the police.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/16433671#pstart1204768>

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The Braidwood Review & District Advocate

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### **STRANGE COINCIDENCE**

When **Constable Ford** murdered **Mrs. Laws** and then **shot himself**

at **Leichhardt** recently, he completed a tragic **triangle of death**. He was the **third constable** who has served at Grenfell to die by violence.

**Constables Claude Bovard** and **George J. Duncan** were the other two. Over ten years ago **Ford** and **Bovard** served together at **Grenfell**, and **Duncan** was stationed there soon after they left.

<http://trove.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/article/119404489>

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