

# BALLYMOYER AND THE JAPANESE LADY

BY LORNA QUIN



*Ballymoyer House, County Armagh, in a late nineteenth century watercolour. The older and lower Georgian section projects from the back.*

In the 1980s, in a district of Tokyo, an old lady called Tetsuko was sorting out the contents of a traditional Japanese storage chest known as a nagamochi which had belonged to her mother in law, Masa Suzuki, who had died nearly twenty years previously. When Tetsuko opened the chest, she found it contained more than eight hundred letters, written on hand made paper, in hentai kena style of Japanese, no longer used. The letters were written from right to left, in columns. They were tied up with ribbon, many contained pressed flowers and leaves, which fell out when opened. When she read the letters, each of which were several feet long, she realised they had been written by a foreigner because of little grammatical errors and vocabulary mistakes. They were sealed with wax, with the motto, “Swift and faithful” in English. She knew she had come

across something very special and following many years of research in Japan, Ireland, England and France, the story of the author of the letters and the recipient, was told in the book, *‘The Sword and the Blossom’*, by *Peter Pagnamenta and Momoko Williams*. John Muldrew lent me the book, I read it and was fascinated by the true



*A Nagamochi Chest*

story and I'd like to share it with you. So, how do these letters found in Tokyo have a connection with our part of the world, rural Co Armagh? Well, they were written by Arthur Hart Synnot, of Ballymoyer House, between Whitecross and Newtownhamilton. The letters have a backdrop of the first half of the twentieth century, and Arthur's story spans the world, taking in South Africa, Japan, Manchuria, Hong Kong and France, England and Ireland. It's a story of social divisions, cultural differences, the workings of The British Empire, two world wars and the partition of Ireland.



***Arthur's father, Major General Arthur Fitzroy Hart-Synnot, CB, CMG, and Arthur's mother Mary, daughter of Mark Synnot of Ballymoyer.***

I'm going to begin by telling the story of Arthur's life.

Arthur Henry Seton Hart Synnot was born on 19th July 1870. He was the eldest son of Major General Arthur Fitzroy Hart and Mary Synnot, co heir of Ballymoyer House. His brother Ronald said of him, "He had a remarkable degree of physical and intellectual prowess, which he developed with great industry." His family was steeped in the British Army and the traditions of the Empire. He was

educated in King William's College, Isle of Man, where he excelled at sport, playing cricket, rugby, steeplechase (hurdles), high jump and 100 yards. On his first attempt he won a place at Sandhurst, where he passed out with honours. He left Sandhurst in 1890 and went to India as a subaltern in 1st Battalion of East Surrey Regiment, of which his father was a colonel. After eight years in India, he returned to go to Staff College. Queen Victoria came to review the troops at Aldershot Barracks in 1899 and Arthur's father rode on Arthur's horse with his two sons alongside him. The three of them fought in The Boer War, where Arthur and his



brother won DSOs. Arthur's horse was killed while he was riding it. His father retired after thirty eight years' service and came home to run the estate at Ballymoyer. Arthur was now promoted to the rank of captain on £230 per annum.

Now, how did the Synnots come to be in Co. Armagh? Synnot, from Dublin, was made Registrar of County Armagh in 1600s and that is likely where the connection begins. Walter Synnot built a lodge at Ballymoyer in the 1700s. Eventually, the property passed to Arthur's mother

on the death of her brother. Her husband, Arthur Fitzroy Hart took on the name Hart Synnot. Mary Hart Synnot brought her pony and trap and her gardener and his family with her from Dorset. She was an enterprising woman who started a large scale poultry business and she won prizes for her butter from her Jersey cows at the local Newry

*“she won prizes for her butter”*

Agricultural Show. The demesne farm was under the “energetic leadership of John Muldrew and was systematically stimulated and brought up to date.” (Quote from Ronald’s Family History written in 1960s) Ronald resigned from the army and came home to Ballymoyer. Mr Muldrew and Ronald worked together, demonstrated the use of fertilisers and a reaper binder machine to the sceptical locals.

Meanwhile, son Arthur was Aide -de -Camp to his Uncle. A new Alliance had been formed between Britain and Japan in 1902 to stand up to increasing Russian aggression. If either Japan or Britain were attacked by a single country, the other would remain neutral and if either country was attacked by more than two aggressors, the other country would be obliged to join in on their partner’s behalf. The War Office was looking for those interested to go to Japan and learn the language and observe how the Japanese army



***Arthur Hart-Synnot as a captain, around 1903. He is wearing the Distinguished Service Order he had just won in South Africa. He gave this picture to Masa.***

worked. Arthur was selected by the War Office, being already fluent in French and being able to speak some German. He started a course on Japanese at London University. Arthur was in the second batch of four officers to be sent. He spent the Christmas of 1903 at Ballymoyer House. He attended St Luke’s Church at Ballymoyer on Christmas Day. The beautiful matching stained glass windows in the church were given by Arthur’s grandfather.

In January 1904, Arthur set sail for Japan on the Wakasa Maru, the journey was estimated as forty seven days. However, while on board the ship, war started between Japan and Russia with the Japanese attack on the Russian Pacific Fleet at Port Arthur. The ship would only go as far as Ceylon and he got another ship from Java to Japan.

When Arthur arrived in Tokyo, he stayed at The Imperial Hotel. The cultural difference must have been enormous. Arthur had spent many years abroad but always in countries ‘Anglified’ to a certain extent by their membership of The



***Ballymoyer Church.***

British Empire. Japan was just emerging slowly from a feudal system. He was impressed by the cleanliness and courteousness of the people. The women were in traditional kimono dress and wore wooden clogs. Underneath their kimono, they had a petticoat which pinned their knees together and this meant they walked with an unusual shuffling gait.

Arthur went to the Kaikoshu, the Japanese Army



*Masa Suzuki in 1905 or 1906*

Officers' Club to get some news of how the war was going, try out his Japanese and get a meal. The club was opposite a long cherry lined slope which ran up to the Yasukuni shrine with Shinto Priests. Arthur was interested in nature and gardening. It was April and he noticed a girl looking at the peach blossom. He thought she was beautiful and he later told his family that he was smitten immediately. Love at first sight?

Who was this girl who captured Arthur's heart? Her name was Masa Suzuki. Her father, Kakiyiro Suzuki, had a barber's shop in an old working class district of Tokyo. Masa was the youngest daughter of seven children, three boys and four girls. She was literate, numerate and

intelligent and she had left school at fourteen. She had been taught to bow to males in the family and to eat separately from them. She had obediently entered an arranged marriage to an older man who was a paper wholesaler. When he decided to divorce her, the little girl they had, as was the custom, went with her father. Masa was dumped and discarded. In April 1904, she had gone to live with her second oldest brother who had a barber's shop in the district which contained embassies and government offices.

## “ Love at first sight? ”

Masa applied for and got a job working as a clerk at the Army Officers' club. After that first meeting under the peach blossom, Arthur began seeing her for outings and picnics. She took him to the old city and brought him back to her family where they shared green tea as they sat on the floor. As Arthur was the second group of officers to come out from England, he had not yet been posted to the war in Manchuria. He asked Masa to keep house for him and offered to pay her a better wage than she had been earning as a clerk. Initially her family were against it but her brothers eventually agreed. It was not an unusual arrangement, the girl was a 'temporary wife' and both parties knew it was only for a few years. Their house in Asakusa looked over the river. Masa was paid thirty yen or three pounds a month. Arthur experienced Japanese life to the full, ate rice with pickled vegetables and grilled eel as a luxury. The Japanese language was difficult, the verb was at the end of a sentence. The form of words changed according to who you were talking to, honorifics. A teacher came to the house every day and his spoken Japanese advanced. He called Masa "Dolly" and they seemed to be very happy together, they both found each other physically attractive. Arthur was shy and a bit of a loner, he often found English women brash and forward. There was a British community who would have tea parties, play cricket, cards, but he could not invite them

back to his house. Even at this stage, Arthur would rather spend time with Masa than attend these parties with other westerners. Due to the summer humidity, they left the city and travelled to the area around Mount Fuji. They walked, enjoyed the views, the plants and fell deeply in love.

***“We will be so happy  
when the war is over.”***

In December 1904, Arthur was to move to Manchuria to observe the war at close quarters. He decided to pay Masa to remain in the house so she need not go out to work. He sent her his first postcard.

“Have arrived in Osaka. Am so sad to be apart



***Arthur and Masa in a Hong Kong photographer’s studio in 1911, when he was about to return to Europe. He was forty and she was thirty two.***

from you. I think about you all the time.” He sent another postcard later that day. He then wrote her a proper letter. He had a lock of her hair and he began to call her “darling” and told her “We will be so happy when the war is over.” This was the start of an epic correspondence that culminated in those hundreds of letters which were found in the nagamochi.

In the meantime, Masa had rented a smaller house and taken all Arthur’s possessions to be stored in a diplomat’s house. The war ended on second January 1905. Arthur was sent back to Tokyo after five months of separation. Japan had won and even British schoolchildren got a day off school to celebrate the victory over Russia. Arthur got an extension to May. He was overjoyed to be reunited with Masa. He made a photo album of his war trip. He wore the loose cotton Yukata. They went cormorant fishing, he improved his Japanese and that summer they travelled to see other parts of Japan. Arthur received the Manchuria Medal and from Japan, The Order of Sacred Class. Masa’s brothers visited, her mother teased Arthur because of his size and he fell deeper and deeper in love. He had never before known such a settled period of domestic bliss in his adult life.

The British Navy visited, Prince Arthur of Connaght came to Japan to confer The Order of the Garter on the Emperor of Japan. Arthur was invited to a party at the newly upgraded British Embassy and bowed to the Emperor.

The two lovers went on another trip to the mountains of Yokohama and they bought plants and bulbs to be shipped to Ballymoyer because Arthur was to go home on leave. Masa didn’t come to the boat to see him off. She rented a smaller house, always careful about monetary concerns.

At Ballymoyer, there were great celebrations for Arthur’s return. He had been picked up at Newry Station by the coachman. Locals and workers pushed the wheels of the carriage up the long drive to the house. There was a band

playing, there was a fireworks display. Relatives had come to stay for a grand dinner. The Ballymoyer gardens were planted with bamboos, camellias, magnolias, irises and tea bushes. Arthur told his family about Masa. By this time he had received the news that she was expecting a baby. She wrote to him at Ballymoyer and he posted her many letters from the Post Office in Whitecross. He was deeply in love and wrote, "From Arthur, to the Queen of my heart" "English women are different from my darling and I don't like them. There is only one woman for me in the whole world." His sister Beatrice shopped for clothes to be sent to Japan for Masa but his parents found the situation harder to understand. Masa gave birth to a baby boy on 13th December but Arthur didn't hear about the birth until February. The baby was given the name Kiyoshi and registered as her brother's child and then given to Masa for adoption. Arthur went to London to ask for a posting to Hong Kong. He then returned to Ballymoyer to say goodbye to his parents. He arrived in Japan in April 1907 and he and Masa went on a holiday to Kyoto. He told her of his plan to get a house in Hong Kong and in the several months annual holiday he would have, he would come to Japan to live with her. In Hong Kong he suffered from the high humidity. He built his own house which was prefabricated in Japan. Masa went to Hong Kong in November 1908. Arthur came down with malaria. A cousin, Norman, came out and visited and met and liked Masa.

After the Land acts of 1899 and 1902, the tenants on the 7100 acre estate could buy their own farms but as it took a while for prices to be

## “ *He proposed marriage* ”

agreed, the estate was way down the list for compensation from the government. His father was cutting wood in Ballymoyer and after “rupturing” himself, travelled to London for an operation on his local doctor's advice. Five

days after the operation, he died in London on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1910. In only four days, he was buried in Ballymoyer with a military funeral, befitting someone of his rank. Masa wanted Arthur to go back to Ballymoyer but this would mean he would forgo his summer leave with her and he wasn't prepared to sacrifice this. Masa was pregnant again and Hideo was born in December and passed off as her brother's child and again adopted by Masa. Arthur had written to his Uncle Sir Reginald Hart in the War Office in London asking to be sent back to Japan but his uncle replied that this was not possible. He proposed marriage and in one month he wrote ten letters, each letter being six feet long. He explained that he needed to stay three more years in the Army to get a good pension. Masa left her three month old baby to see him in Hong Kong but she said she would not marry him nor go to England but she would wait for him to come to Japan and live with her. Clearly she wasn't a money grabber. Her love for him was sincere. She cared about her own family, especially her mother, and wasn't prepared to leave her home country. She returned to Japan, used her sewing machine to earn money, lived frugally and grew vegetables.

Arthur returned to Ballymoyer and visited his father's grave. His mother was frail and distracted and his sisters Blanche and Beatrice were running the house. The family had not yet been compensated for the tenants getting ownership of their land (Irish Land Act). His brother Ronald was running the estate and Arthur was suffering a bout of ill health from a previous attack of malaria. In his bedroom he had a shrine to Masa. His family knew about Masa but not the boys. He wrote to her, speaking about when they will go fishing together in Ballymoyer. He sent her pressed lavender. The doctor told him to extend his leave to aid his full recuperation. He chopped wood and cut lawns on the estate. He planted gooseberries, raspberries and currants and embarked on a scheme to make a Japanese

## “*I am building this garden only for you,*”

garden. A pond was excavated leaving an island and he diverted a stream to make a waterfall. He began to keep bees and made a bridge. He wrote to Masa, “*I am building this garden only for you.*” He spoke again of her coming to Ballymoyer and of them being together in Japan.

In 1912, he hoped for a posting to Peking but he was to go to Burma with his regiment. It was remote, then a province of India. He bought Masa a ruby ring. The climate was very hot and humid. He realised he could leave the army in 1914 with a pension as a major. In the summer of 1912 he spent his leave with Masa and the two boys in a house by the sea which Masa had rented. Arthur had wanted to spend it with Masa alone but she had insisted that the two boys come with them as Hideo was just learning to walk. After the summer, he hated being back in Burma. He began learning Burmese to earn some extra rupees and he passed the language test. He lived frugally, cutting his food and drink bill. He did mention Kiyoshi in his letters to Masa, but never Hideo. He spent the summer leave in Japan as usual. In Ballymoyer, his mother was ill with kidney trouble. His brother Ronald wrote to Arthur, requesting power of attorney. Masa urged him to go and see his mother but she died in 1913. Ballymoyer was now his. He wrote to his brother to try and rent out the house. His sisters offered to stay on in the house but he declined their offer as he said it was contrary to their interests. Hamptons came over from London to prepare a booklet for prospective tenants but no one came forward and the house was closed and left in the care of Mr Muldrew, the steward and agent in Newry, Mr Meares.

In 1914, the Great War began. The Anglo Japanese Alliance won control of the sea approaches to Peking and North China. Arthur

was serving in Northern India as a Staff Officer. Masa sent him parcels: six pair zori sandals, makigami papers, envelopes and silk yarns. He wrote back to her, “*I still have three pairs of sandals!*” He had a desk job, in charge of internal security. In Singapore in February 1915, he had to put down a mutiny by eight hundred Sikh soldiers, with help from Japan. All Arthur’s cousins were fighting in Europe in the war and Arthur felt out of it.

## “*Ballymoyer was now his*”

In Japan, the second little boy, Hideo suffered many infections. Kiyoshi was picked on in his local elementary school because of his height. Hideo was admitted to Tokyo University Hospital for an x-ray and died in the middle of December. Arthur had only seen him three times. In his letters he was sorry that the child died because Masa was upset but he did not seem to mourn the child for himself. He wrote that he wished Ballymoyer was not his because it was a white elephant.

1916 brought the Easter Rising in Dublin. The Battle of Jutland took place with a loss of six thousand sailors and there was the horrific Somme assault. In October 1916, Arthur was sent back to Europe. The Japanese Navy was escorting Allied ships in the Mediterranean. Arthur had two weeks’ leave and he met with his family. He was to be sent to France. He wrote his will and said ten thousand yen per annum was to be sent to Masa. He saw his family and they accepted his commitment to Masa but still didn’t know about his son. On first January, he was sent to Picardy. This was a new type of combat for Arthur with night raids and trench warfare. He was writing to Masa on handmade makigami paper, long letters from the trenches. He hadn’t seen her for three years and his sister Beatrice acted as go between regarding money being sent to Masa. Arthur was promoted to Lieutenant



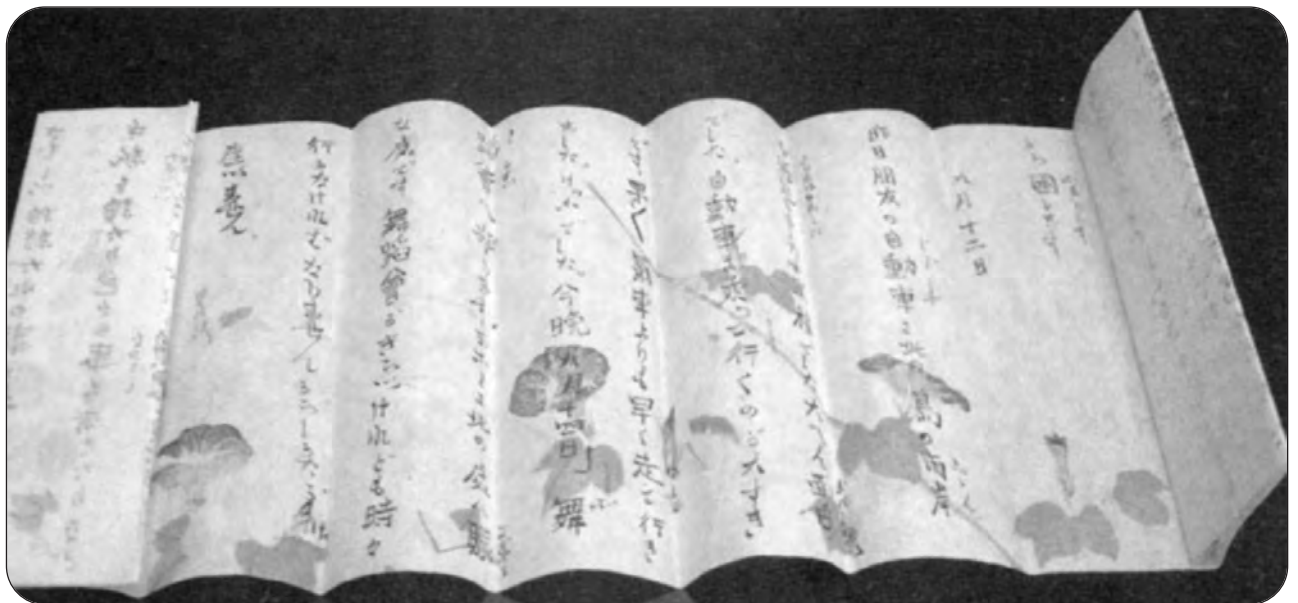
*Masa and Kiyoshi*

**“Arthur wrote more than two hundred letters to Masa”**

Colonel. The Germans retreated behind the Hindenberg line and America entered the war. Masa’s allowance from Arthur wasn’t reaching

her. Kiyoshi was in private school and he wrote to his father asking for a watch but Arthur wrote back saying he couldn’t steal one from a German officer as his son was suggesting. Arthur wrote more than two hundred letters to Masa during this period and received a hundred and eighty in return, though some were lost forever to the war. He was now writing to his son. In his leave in May, he returned to Ballymoyer. It wasn’t worth opening up the big house and he stayed with his Aunt at Rostrevor. The gardener and his wife were acting as caretaker and the steward was looking after the farm which was doing slightly better with the inflated prices for corn and potatoes.

Arthur returned to fierce fighting, he was the commanding officer with 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion of the Lancashire Fusiliers. The Ypres offensive failed but even from the trenches Arthur wrote to his Darling Dolly, “*I cannot bear to be apart anymore*”. He hoped to be promoted to Brigadier General soon. Again, he was in the thick of the war. He writes, “*I am absolutely exhausted, as we are fighting day and night and cannot sleep. I carry my darling’s photographs in my breast pocket all the time.*” In another letter he writes, “*The other night I went out on duty and suddenly sank into the mud up to my waist. It was very difficult to pull*



*Arthur’s letters were written in Japanese on handmade paper*

*myself out. There can be no other place in the world as horrible as this.*" In March he collapsed with pneumonia which was the result of an earlier gassing. He was in a critical condition for three days and nights. Army doctors sent him home on sick leave and he again returned to Ballymoyer. When he left again for France, the front had shifted back to the trench lines the British Expeditionary force had held in 1914, nearly four years earlier. He had not seen Masa for nearly five years but their correspondence was as faithful as ever. He had applied for a job as a liaison officer with the Japanese Army which was intending to attack the Bolsheviks and secure the Trans Siberian Railway. He was on the platform at Charing Cross, a staff officer from the War Office came running up to him and asked if he was still interested in this job. Arthur replied in the affirmative and he was told he must go on to Bologne, and wait instructions there. He was overjoyed at the thought of going to Japan and seeing Masa again and wrote to her, "*I think I will be in Japan by the time this letter arrives.*" However, after he returned from posting this letter, he found a telegram with the news that his services were not required. There was the suspicion that someone higher up had again made decisions and Arthur had been overlooked. He now realised he would not see Masa again until the war was over. A few hours later, he received another telegram telling him that he had been promoted to Brigadier General.

Around dusk on Saturday May 11<sup>th</sup>, Arthur was walking with his Brigadier Major Captain Wright when a German shell fell on them in an almost direct hit. Captain Wright died and Arthur was conscious but knew both his legs were in tatters. Doctors injected pints of salt and water into a vein in his elbow so that his heart could pump something after the loss of so much blood.

He was taken to the Canadian Field Hospital where both his legs were amputated above the

knee at 3 am. He was in a coma but after six days, he was moved via an ambulance train to Rouen, where he was treated in the British 8<sup>th</sup> General Hospital. He was forty seven and most of the casualties were in their teens or twenties. The stumps were excruciatingly painful and the wounds had to be drained regularly. There were flaps of skin that the surgeons had sewn around the thighbone ends that had yet to heal. His right eardrum had burst and he had nearly lost the sight of his right eye. He had shrapnel in his arm and chest and flesh had been blown off his back and buttocks. However, in shaky Japanese writing, he wrote to Masa. Beatrice had already written to her a short note informing her that Arthur had been gravely injured and was in hospital. Arthur bravely informed her that within two or three months, the stumps will be harder and he can get artificial legs. He needed another operation as the bone on the left leg was too long. He was getting stronger, having his bed brought outside each day. He sent Masa money for her birthday and photographs of the hospital and began the faithful letter writing, numbering each letter and corresponding reply. "*Darling it is going to be difficult to go back to Japan without legs, and you are going to find me ugly*". By his letters he was intending to be in Japan by the early months of 1919.

He knew his military career was over and he would not reach the rank of major-general that his father and uncle had. He was sent back to England to Edward VII Hospital and was allowed access to the gardens of Buckingham Palace. Masa received news of his injuries in late June and her first letter to him arrived on 18<sup>th</sup> August. He wrote to her, "*Darling, darling, I have been thinking about you every day, looking at your photographs.*" Ballymoyer was shut up, there was no electricity and the gardener left. Arthur moved to a mansion in Bedfordshire and then a convalescent home on the South of France. Kiyoshi, who was attending a school set up by French

missionaries, wrote to him looking shoes, magic lanterns and swimming trunks. Arthur heard the roars of the crowds on Armistice Day and five days later he was given temporary legs and wrote to tell Masa about them, adding, *“I wish I could learn to walk soon in order to come and live with you. I cannot plan anything until I can walk properly.”*

The next part of the story is difficult to relate. Arthur was in Cannes, recuperating and learning to walk again. He mentioned going back to Japan in his letter 23<sup>rd</sup> March. He began to speak more about his difficulties than his progress. When he first arrived in Cannes, he wrote, *“It would have been wonderful if you had been here with me,”* soon however, his letters begin to get shorter and more formal and negative. *“There is nothing new to tell you.”* That is not the Arthur we know because Masa and he were soul mates and he shared all his thoughts with her. He stopped sending the pressed flowers. He told her he was going back to England and then to Ireland. There was no mention of Japan. He wrote to her, *“Maybe it would have been better if I had died when I was injured. I am no longer able to leave England,*



***Violet Drower, VAD Sister***



***Violet with Arthur in his wheelchair***

*and as I cannot live on my own, I am going to marry an English woman.”* He tried to reason with her and it was as if he himself was not convinced of his own actions and he was trying to justify his actions to himself as well as to Masa. *“I am sure you will forgive me. If I had not this injury I was coming back to you. You are a very kind woman, and if you think about my loneliness, I think you will forgive me for marrying. ...I will not forget my darling for the rest of my life, but we will never be able to see each other again. I cannot express in words how difficult this is, and with a heavy heart I write, but I had to write sooner or later. Please forgive me. Please forgive me .Sad Arthur.”* The relationship, which had survived so many partings now seemed to be over. It is hard to understand Arthur’s sudden change, we can only go by his letters and see that he seemed to be wanting a companion to look after him. He doesn’t mention falling in love and he doesn’t mention any change in his feelings towards Masa so perhaps it is solely for a companion cum nurse that he is marrying but the letter must have devastated Masa. Her first reaction was to come to London.

Arthur's engagement to Violette Drower was announced in *The Times* on 3<sup>rd</sup> June and Arthur did not write to tell Masa the news until 8<sup>th</sup> June so his last letters to her were lies, as he did not tell her the truth about his plans. When he wrote to her again, he says, *"I have told my future wife about you and she understands. She is called Violette. I would like to be kind to you as before. I have thought about you a lot.... Please forgive me. The marriage will be on July 3<sup>rd</sup>. Sayonara, from Arthur, to Darling Dolly."*

Arthur's injury had been reported in the London newspapers the previous summer. His rank also meant that Queen Victoria's son, The Duke of Connaught, now in Cannes, asked Arthur to call. He was very well connected to the top of British Society and yet he had loved with a passion, a poor Japanese girl.

Violette Drower, who was a trained sister working with the Red Cross, helped in Arthur's recuperation in Cannes. Her nickname was Chi, apparently for the China blue eyes she had. She was thirty three and had never been married. Her father was a London surveyor and she spoke fluent French. In a very short time, six or seven weeks after they met, she and Arthur decided to get married. The ceremony took place in St Paul's Church in London and the wedding was reported in detail in the *Newry Reporter* as, "Society Wedding".

Arthur's brother Ronald stood close to him while he was making his vows and supported him when needed. Ronald says of Violette, *"only one compensation came to my brother, but it was a great one,"* referring to Arthur's marriage. There was a ten day motoring honeymoon in Wales and they arrived in Ballymoyer on 13<sup>th</sup> July 1919. They stayed with Arthur's aunt in Rostrevor while Ballymoyer was made ready for them. Violette took over the revival and modernisation of the house. He had long walks with the steward John Muldrew who was running the farm. They had dairy cows and grew oats and wheat. Ireland was

tense in the aftermath of the Rising. He could not get a local couple so his English batman Tansley and his wife came to live with them. There were now only 325 acres and the big house. The compensation from the government was less than they had been promised and it was used to pay off an historic mortgage. Ninety acres sloping towards the Newtown road was put up for sale at £42 per acre. He auctioned off farm equipment and installed a new saw mill to cut beech, spruce and fir. He also started a poultry business but times were difficult. The Rector at Lisnadill had been shot



***Arthur and Violet Drower in Juan-les-Pins around 1922***

and there were killings in Newry.

Arthur still wrote to Masa but not regularly, and posted his letters from the post office in Whitecross, saying of the wedding, *"I was very pleased with the wedding and I hope you feel the same."* She accused him of misleading her and betraying her. She said she was coming to London to marry him and the only thing to stop her would be if he would send her 10,000 yen. She asked him why he had not asked her to come to London when he realised he could not

go to Japan. She said she had to fight for her son and he asked her did she think of him as a cold and cruel man. He posted shoes from Whitecross for Kiyoshi. For Masa, her son was the sole focus of her life. Arthur had never been a very intimate father, once writing to Masa, "*The children are lovely but life would be freer without them.*" In January of 1920, he had a letter from Masa. He no longer called her "*darling*" and he made no inquiry about his son. Masa said she wished to treat him like a brother and sent the lace shawl to Violette which Arthur had once given her. It was during this time that he came to St. John's Mullabrack and unveiled the War Memorial Tablet. This was given front page headlines in the Ulster Gazette. Towards the end of 1920, Arthur left the Tansleys and John Muldrew in charge and set off to London, Morocco, Tangier and Cannes, if he did all this travelling, there is the possibility he could have travelled to Japan. He bought a villa between Cannes and Nice. His car was converted for him to drive, he worked the clutch with his back. He could go swimming in the warm Mediterranean and he enjoyed the company of other expats living along the south coast of France.

In 1922, he withdrew his servants from the house and Mr Muldrew was left on sole charge.

He reduced the allowance to Masa from 800 to 400 yen per month. Masa moved back to Tokyo and opened a sandwich shop because Arthur had taught her how to make sandwiches but this venture just lasted a year. They almost gave up writing and in a seventeen month period there was only one letter.

The Anglo Irish Treaty was signed. There were terrible times in Ireland and Ballymoyer House, on 1<sup>st</sup> July, was commandeered by the Auxiliary Police Constabulary of the Northern Government. An officer and sixty men presented themselves at the door and forced Mr Muldew to give them admission. Mr Muldrew went into Newry to see Meares, the agent, and Ronald telegraphed to take out and

store as much of the contents of the house as possible. "*The invaders proceeded to at once convert the premises into a fortified barracks for themselves.*" Many smaller items were lost or appropriated by the upholders of law and order and many others sent to auction rooms in Belfast and sold at a loss. Both Beatrice and Ronald went to Ballymoyer to see for themselves what had happened. Letters were flying among Mr Muldrew, Arthur, Ronald and Beatrice. Arthur was demanding compensation for this "*outrage*" and loss of business from the saw mill. Eventually the invaders left. Two representatives of the new Northern Government were sent to London to negotiate with Ronald, Meares and the family solicitors. Ronald writes, "*I had expected that the Northern Government whose police had ravaged the home of a distinguished and severely wounded soldier, would be full of apologies and desire to pay generous compensation. Quite contrary attitude of two officials.*" In addition to an agreed rent, £5000 was given as a lump sum and this was passed to Arthur. The offer of a house breaker to level the site of the house and to pay £50 for materials was accepted and the remaining outbuildings were disposed of. That left the avenue and glen of 49 acres. In 1938 it was offered to the National Trust, the management being transferred to the Forestry Commission, the park and Japanese garden were planted over with pine trees. Car parks were made for visitors in later years.

Arthur began to write to Masa regularly again, first on a monthly and then on a fortnightly basis. They exchanged presents such as winter underwear, a pruning saw and she sent him seeds and bulbs. In letters, they go over times together in the past.

He sent parcels to his son sealed with wax and the Synnot crest. He sent 200 yen and then 350 yen. At his second attempt, Kiyoshi was admitted to Japan's Imperial University. He was the school's leading athlete at short and middle distance and he beat the Japanese record for 800 m. Masa sent a



***Masa and Kiyoshi in Kyoto, after Masa had moved there and rented a house to be near him.***

newspaper cutting to Arthur and he wrote back saying that he too was a good runner at school. Masa moved house to be near her son who studied law. When he graduated, he moved to Tokyo University to study Philosophy. Kiyoshi then went to a French University for three years.

The boat stopped at Marsaille but he got the train to Paris. Obviously there was not much warmth on both sides of the father/ son relationship. Masa encouraged him to visit his father and when he eventually agreed, she told him to behave himself. He replied, *"I am the son of a remarkable mother."* In Japan, there was a marked move towards militarism. All foreign students were being recalled. On his way home, Kiyoshi took the train to see Arthur. He had not seen his father for twenty five years. He wrote to his mother, *"I was overwhelmed when I saw him. I thanked him for all the things he had done. I forgot all my old grievances, once I saw what a kind person he is."* Kiyoshi stayed two nights with Arthur and Violette. He was



***Kiyoshi and his fiancée, Tetsuko Katsuda 1939***

moved when he went into the study and saw a photograph of his mother, momentos of their time together, piles of letters and Japanese dictionaries.

In the summer of 1939, Arthur travelled to London for a leg fitting and because of the war, was unable to return to France. His brother Ronald was bursar at St John's College Oxford Arthur and Violette stayed at the President's Lodgings at the College. All Arthur's possessions were in France, the house was taken over by the Germans and all the personal artefacts lost. Arthur continued to send money to Japan up until the Pearl Harbour attack in 1941.

In Japan, Kiyoshi married his fiancée Tetsuko in April 1941. He was an announcer on radio but had to follow the Japanese propaganda machine. He had inherited his father's gift for languages and now that Japan was fully involved in a world war, Kiyoshi was drafted into the army as a private in the 10th Heavy Field Artillery Regiment. He was to learn Russian while he was serving in

Manchuria. The Japanese had invaded China in 1937 and the war there had been going on for four years when America was attacked. Kiyoshi was not interested in rising to an officer. In Tokyo in March 1945, 300 B29 bombers flew over, dropping incendiary bombs and killing over 100,000. After the two Atomic bombs were dropped, Russia invaded Manchuria. Kiyoshi was in a regiment which surrendered and were taken 800 miles from Vladivostok in cattle trains to build the gulag for Japanese prisoners. His family did not know of his whereabouts and whether he was alive. Masa and Tetsuko bought a house together and Tetsuko became the principal of a school. In 1945, when the war was over, Masa received a letter from Beatrice, Arthur's sister, telling her that he had died of a heart attack in 1942. She sent a newspaper obituary cutting and asked if Masa wanted any of his possessions but Masa declined. She was still living in hope that her son was alive and she had become more religious, praying every day.

In 1947, the first of the Japanese prisoners were released from Russian camps and Tetsuko heard from one of them about Kiyoshi. Kiyoshi had collapsed with a fever while doing hard manual labour and was taken to a military hospital. He translated for the Russian doctor even though he was very ill himself. On Christmas Eve 1945, he asked a young soldier to take a message to Tetsuko, sending her his love and wishing her good luck, and to thank Masa for all that she had done for him. He passed away later that night. Tetsuko never told Masa that her son had died. Masa herself died in 1965, almost sixty years after Arthur had returned to her from his first trip to Manchuria.

She had the chance to marry him in 1911 but had listened to her family and turned his offer to become Mrs Hart Synnot down. She had put her family's wishes first. Arthur had put his own needs first when he married Violette, saying he was "grateful" she had taken him on. Nowhere does he say he loves Violette so it may have been a marriage of convenience.



*Kiyoshi and his fiancée, Tetsuko Katsuda  
1939*

Arthur and Masa's amazing story of love spans continents, class, culture, religion and war. I think Arthur's love for Masa was incredible but he found it difficult to share her with his boys and wanted her exclusively for himself. It wasn't a generous love, it was an obsessive love, where Arthur's needs were always paramount. He certainly lacked warmth as a father and there was a selfishness in his love for Masa in that while it was very deep, he could not put her needs above his own and therefore when he was injured, the prime motives for his actions were to serve his own needs. If the troubles in Ireland hadn't caused the ruin of Ballymoyer, perhaps we would be able to visit the beautiful house today. If Arthur hadn't been injured, it is likely that his love for Masa would have survived. If there hadn't been a Second World War, would the grandchildren of Kiyoshi be living in Ballymoyer today? Perhaps Masa would have come home to Ballymoyer and today there would be a beautiful Japanese garden as a lasting testament to a love which had endured so much.