



# LEC Book Club

May 2008

Book of  
the  
Month

## *Falling Blossom*

Peter Pagnamenta & Monoko Williams

The tragic true love story of an English officer, Arthur Hart-Synnot and a Japanese woman, Masa Suzuki, played out against the background of World War One.

This is the beautiful, true story of a tragic love affair. When Arthur Hart-Synnot, a disciplined, conservative British army officer met Masa Suzuki, a bright, beautiful Japanese girl, whilst on a military posting to Japan, the pair fell deeply and hopelessly in love. Masa was more than a 'temporary wife' like most of the other officer's Japanese girlfriends. Arthur described her as 'the supreme woman in the world'. When he was recalled to England, then sent to Burma, and then to India, their relationship struggled on, in the face of opposition from her family, from the massive gap between their cultures, from the military and from the huge distances between them.

Kept going by the many letters they both dedicated themselves to writing, they remained devoted to each other, despite seeing each other only for a few weeks over more than a decade. Masa gave birth to two sons who she raised alone in Japan, waiting for the day Arthur would return from his latest army posting. Yet tragedy was to strike and after being horrifically wounded in World War One, Arthur was never able to return to his love.

This is a unique picture of the world seen from two very different perspectives. It is a true life Madam Butterfly story, where the differences of tradition and custom dictate the final tragic outcome. Peter Pagnamenta tells this extraordinary tale in heart-rending detail, using Arthur's many letters to Masa, translated from Japanese by his co-author Momoko Williams and it is illustrated with photographs of the families.

**Next Meeting:**

**Tuesday, May 27th, 8pm @ Limerick Education Centre**