

Princess Margaret's books to be sold

Sunday Sep 24, 2006 22:09 AEST

AP - A collection of Princess Margaret's books, including a lover's guide given to her the day she called off plans to marry her great love Peter Townsend, are to be sold on October 5, a London auction house said.

The curiously titled *The Delights of Wisdom Concerning Conjugal Love - After Which Follows the Pleasures of Insanity Concerning Scortatory Love* is among 550 hardbacks and paperbacks that belonged to Queen Elizabeth II's sister, who died in February 2002 at the age of 71.

Inside, it bears a typed inscription dated October 31, 1955, the day the princess issued a statement calling off plans to marry Townsend, a dashing army captain who was frowned on as a royal suitor because he was divorced.

It reads: "To Margaret, Princess of the Realm" and is signed simply "WM."

The book, which looks at marriage and morality, is the work of Emanuel Swedenborg, the 18th century Swedish scientist and philosopher.

"We had to look scortatory up. It means fornicatory. It's actually quite a serious book, said a spokeswoman for Bloomsbury Auctions, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It's a spiritual book about love, but it's got sex acts in it, too. It's not smutty, though. There are no drawings."

"You can't even say it's been well thumbed. Goodness knows why she had it."

She said the identity of WM is not known.

The collection, which is being sold in five batches, also includes a biography of Group Captain Townsend.

Margaret relinquished hopes of marrying the former royal equerry after being advised by the government that she would have to renounce her right to the throne. Her later marriage to Lord Snowdon ended in divorce in 1978.

Expected to fetch about STG1,500 (\$A3,800), the collection is being sold by a collector who has asked not to be identified. It is not believed to be Margaret's son, David Linley, who recently raised more than STG13 million (\$A32.8 million) from the sale of his mother's jewellery, furniture and artworks.

Other texts in the collection include *Racism and Its Elimination*, signed by the author, Sir Rupert John, and given to Margaret in 1981.

There are also romantic books, as well as novels by Iris Murdoch and PG Wodehouse, books of jokes and one on parlour games.