

Royal nanny's gift sold at auction in Edinburgh

A silver makeup case given by the late Queen to King Charles' Scottish nanny – who was later dismissed in a controversy over the young prince's royal pudding – fetched more than £2,000 at auction in Edinburgh.

The Elizabeth II silver compact by Padgett & Braham for Cartier was a gift from the Queen to the royal nanny, Helen "No Nonsense" Lightbody.

Miss Lightbody, from Jedburgh in the Scottish Borders, took charge of Prince Charles soon after his birth in 1948 and later looked after Princess Anne.

The stylish 1954 compact, which she later gave to a friend, went under the hammer at Bonhams' online Winter Homes and Interiors Sale in Edinburgh.

It was bought by an online bidder who wished to remain anonymous for £2048 – around three times the £600-800 estimate – after competition from rival collectors.

Miss Lightbody gained a reputation as a strict disciplinarian during her eight years in Royal service but in 1956 overstepped the mark after the Queen sent a request to the kitchen for a particular pudding she thought Prince Charles would like.

The Scots nanny didn't approve and had the special dessert removed from the menu. When the Queen found out, Miss Lightbody's employment was swiftly terminated.



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Despite the ignominious nature of her departure from Royal service, Prince Charles continued to visit Miss Lightbody. She was invited to his investiture as Prince of Wales in 1969 and also to his 21st birthday.

The silver compact came in the form of a 7.7cm x 7.7cm square, centred by a gold EIIR cypher under a crown, with a hinged cover that opened to reveal a mirror.

It came in its original fitted red leather Cartier case, featuring the royal monogram on the lid.

Miss Lightbody gave the royal powder case to a friend in the early 1980s.

Kenneth Naples, Head of Sale, Bonhams Edinburgh, said: "We were delighted to offer this beautiful 1954 silver compact by Padgett & Braham for Cartier, which was a gift from Queen Elizabeth II to the royal nanny, Helen Lightbody.

"Miss Lightbody was a memorable character who was famously dismissed after she overruled the Queen on the selection of a special pudding for the young Prince Charles.

"Despite her departure from the palace, Prince Charles continued to visit her and there remained a connection.

"Objects with such close Royal connections always attract interest from and wide, and we had interest from around the world.

"We are delighted with the result."

Miss Lightbody, was born in Jedburgh in 1908, the daughter of an Edinburgh mill worker.

She was senior nanny to King Charles and Princess Anne from 1948 to 1956, when she returned to Scotland.

She died in a nursing home in Hawick in 1987, aged 79. The Queen sent a message of sympathy to her family on hearing the news of her death.



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