

Pictures: PETER SUBA; CHRIS JACKSON

Royal's favourite flamboyant servant quits... to be a monk



THE Earl and Countess of Wessex were last night said to be "devastated" after their favourite servant handed in his notice... to become a monk.

Prince Edward and his wife Sophie have told royal insiders they "moved heaven and earth" to try to retain the services of Brian Tougher, a royal valet for 30 years.

But the 56-year-old flunkey insisted he was determined to start a new life of prayer. He will leave his job at Bagshot Park in Surrey "within weeks".

"This has come as a complete bombshell and the Earl and Countess are very, very upset," said one Buckingham Palace source last night. "Brian has lived with them ever since they got married.

"He runs their house like clockwork and they will be lost without him. The Prince is a great one for loyalty and familiarity and he relies on Brian.

"You name it and he does it, from driving them around, acting as a butler, pressing clothes, arranging flowers, virtually everything that makes life comfortable for them.

"He has handed in his notice before but the Prince would never accept it. This time, however, he says he wants to start a new life as monk, and he is absolutely determined."

A flamboyant character with a colourful private life in the past, Tougher is a keen dancer in senior Latin and ballroom categories and has partnered several women.

"Brian loves his

BOMBSHELL:
Shocked Edward and Sophie begged Latin dancing fan Brian Tougher, left, to stay



EXCLUSIVE

By **Camilla Tominey** ROYAL EDITOR

dancing and has performed all over the country," said the source. "No one can believe that he wants to give up his job and the hobby which he is so passionate about."

He first hit the headlines in 1992 when he left Edward's bath running in his private apartments and flooded part of Buckingham Palace. It cost £15,000 to repair carpets and ceilings but Edward soon forgave him.

Incredibly, three years later, he nearly repeated the error. A Palace insider said: "Brian turned on the hot and cold taps full blast because the baths are so huge.

"He went to do some other duties but forgot all about the bath and wandered downstairs for a drink in the staff bar.

"Brian suddenly remembered and raced upstairs, but Edward had turned the taps off himself.

"He told him, 'Don't worry Brian, I've done it!' He was a bit standoffish with Brian for a day or so but it didn't last long."

In 1993 it was revealed that Tougher had left his wife Carolyn after two years of marriage and moved into a flat with Palace telephonist Eugene Johnson. The pair had met while on duty at Sandringham during Christmas and "hit it off". However, the two parted company five years later.

The Prince was said to have comforted Tougher, and he moved into Bagshot Park with Edward and Sophie after their 1999 wedding.

Their two children, Lady Louise, 10, and James, Viscount Severn, six, are said to regard Tougher as a "friendly uncle figure".

Added the source: "There is no doubt the whole family will miss Brian terribly.

Royals sometimes become more attached to some of their closest servants than they do to their own family and friends and that is true of Brian."

'House is run like clockwork, they'll be lost without Brian'