

## Prisoner's gift for Wills & Kate - at Her Majesty's pleasure



It is possibly the most painstakingly-made wedding gift that will be received by **Prince William** and **Kate Middleton**.

A prisoner at **Wandsworth jail** has spent up to 100 hundred hours in his cell embroidering a cushion to give to the couple to mark their marriage.

Following a design from a tattoo, the inmate created two love birds and a love heart, through which he stitched the names William and Catherine.

He is one of 420 prisoners in 29 prisons around the country who have signed up to classes run by the charity **Fine Cell Work**, which uses needlework to help rehabilitate convicts and given them a chance to earn money.

Copies of the royal wedding cushion, which will sell for around £150, can be ordered from the charity's website, with about a third - £50 - going to the prisoner.



**Mairi Duthie**, director of Fine Cell Work, said: "The charity was set up as a means of giving people a way of spending their time during periods of enforced idleness in their cells. The prisoners are taught to sew by volunteers. They get to this very high level of skill, and it means they have contact with the outside world."

Details of prisoners involved in the scheme remain confidential, with teachers, many from the Royal College of Needlework, often having no knowledge of past convictions. The aim is to "draw a line" under the past and offer them a new start. Prisoners spend from 20 to 40 hours a week on needlework.

Ms Duthie said: "If you buy something from us, you can write a letter to the very person who has stitched it. It's possibly the first letter they may have had from anyone - ever. It makes a huge difference to them, having made something they're rightly very proud of through hundreds of hours of dedicated craftsmanship."

The idea for the charity stemmed from **Lady Anne Tree**, who was a prison visitor to **Holloway** in the Sixties. It became a charity in 1997. Now three-quarters of stitchers are men. They make a range of items, with a "swag" shopping bag being a best seller.

\* You can follow me on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/RossLydall>