

*Anne Dickinson, our new Coordinator, started work in November last year and will be completely taking over the day to day running of Haslar Visitors on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2009. Here she tells us something of her life before Haslar Visitors Group.*

## **Hello! - Introducing Anne**



My professional background has been one spent working on various aid projects in different locations. This has taken me to Central America, Palestine and West, East and Southern Africa. Prior to my aid work, I have been a book keeper, an English teacher in Asia and done odd jobs here and there including office temp work, fruit picking and packing and even been a movie extra in a Chinese Kung Fu film. I worked my way around the world on virtually no budget at all, which is to say that prior to joining Haslar Visitors Group, I have myself been a migrant worker in foreign kitchens and fields. I have had reasonably intelligent thoughts that I have been unable to articulate in another language. I have on the odd occasion had nowhere to sleep and have slept rough. I too, have experience of being on the wrong side of immigration authorities, having been caught working on a tourist visa and made to leave that particular country. All

of my travails however were fleeting and by choice. I had a credit card in my pocket which could have got me home and dry safely.

Through my international aid work, I have been on the edge of some nasty conflicts, severe food shortages and have seen the inside of a few refugee camps. At times I was able to help, other times I stood by helplessly, dazed, confused and in anguish. Immensely heartening to me has been that whether witnessing conflict or poverty, the people I have met have been extremely welcoming and were touched that I had left my home comforts and come to see and learn for myself about their lives. It is this hope of a mutual touching of lives that has brought me to Haslar Visitors Group.

So far, I have not been disappointed. Our visitors speak eloquently and earnestly about the men they visit and their problems. Men in Haslar tell me how everyone inside has their own problems and what a relief it is to talk to someone from “the outside”. We help where we can, but sometimes we must accept our own limitations in fixing problems and just concentrate on being human – together. My background in having seen some of the reality of clients’ lives has been useful, meanwhile I would ask for everyone’s forbearance as I gather experience in the world of immigration and detention. Finally, I would like to thank our visitors and trustees for sharing their warmth and wisdom with me and our donors and supporters without whom we would not be able to extend our hand of friendship.

*Anne Dickinson*  
*Coordinator*