

Award winning ethical, responsible, sustainable volunteer travel



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## Spring newsletter 2017

### Editorial



My apologies for the late Spring newsletter but we have had some "technical" issues with the website, all resolved now, hopefully!

Our friend and partner Paul Miedema died suddenly on Feb 2nd - we hope you all understand we wanted to make this a tribute to him and his work. Paul was a well respected, passionate human being whose passing has left a huge void in the lives of all who knew him.

I only met Paul once at a volunteer meeting in England and took to him straight away, something that other people have said, he was that sort of man, funny, engaging and obviously passionate about what he did. I didn't know Paul as well as the rest of the *people and places* team who have all spent a lot of time working with Paul and I will leave them to write their memories of Paul.

### Nigel Pegler

Any comments and volunteer experiences welcome at [newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk](mailto:newsletter@travel-peopleandplaces.co.uk)

## Paul was – a gladiator – a huge force for good

bySallie



It has taken me some time to put pen to paper – well digit to keyboard - to write about the horrible loss of my friend and our partner, Paul Miedema.

My first reaction was to write about the loss – huge loss – for his family and friends and colleagues at Calabash; the communities they work with; volunteers; and indeed to me as a friend and *people and places* as a partner – but I wasn't comfortable with writing that way - it took me a while to work out why.

**Paul was – a gladiator – a huge force for good – a passionate advocate for the people he worked with – confrontational - an inspiration.**

For me he was a loyal friend – a teacher – a partner – a mentor.

That's what I want to remember – what I gained by knowing him – not what I have lost.

When [Harold](#), Kate and I decided we wanted to develop a responsible volunteering programme Harold told me that all his experience in responsible travel led him to believe that Paul Miedema at Calabash had to be one of our first partners. I was quickly convinced.....Paul wasn't.....

as I wrote recently for Paul's book of remembrance

My dear, dear friend and mentor Paul,

Remember when I came to talk with you about a volunteer programme in 2005? – you told me to eff off – you had seen the damage that affluent volunteers from “the west” had done in your community – Over fried fish ( lord knows what.... can't remember ) and lots of beer we talked and talked and listened to each other – and then came that moment ....that moment when we both thought....”together we may be able to do this”.....and out of that grew the *people and places* volunteer programme – you .....you did that Paul.

I am so sore from missing you – but I promise – I will continue the work we started – I will not let you down – I will fight to ensure that the communities you cared so much about are not exploited....not in my name.

Travel well my feisty anarchic friend – but please watch over me whilst I try to continue our work.

The last time Paul and I were together was in Thailand - at a workshop we had been asked to attend - the workshop`s goal was to identify ways to discourage orphanage volunteering - an important issue for both of us. I don't know who created more of a stir.....yes I do.....it was Paul - he was (as he always was when he saw injustice and exploitation) STRIDENT....he felt the issue was simple....there never is and never can be a justification for orphanage tourism...he felt the people in the room were not being bold enough in their confrontation of the issue - it was vintage Paul - let's address this head on - however uncomfortable it is.





**Sallie and Paul tuked together**



**Even when grabbing a break  
Paul was campaigning!**



**Paul and co- workshopper  
Philip - someone he didn` t scare!**



**Paul shopping for his daughters  
in Bangkok**

We will so miss his voice – [watch this video – passionate confrontational Paul](#) ( about 27 minutes in) – talking about how, all too often, badly managed volunteer programmes exploit local communities – “extractive” is what he called them....but how well managed programmes can "create a shared humanity".

All of us at *people and places* are committed to continuing the work we started with Paul offering responsible volunteering at [Emmanuel](#) and the [Schools Support](#) programme.

and a PS another thankyou Paul for introducing me to [Rodriguez and his music](#)

## recollections & respect from volunteers

We have been touched by all the messages we have received from volunteers.

"I have fond memories of Paul when he took us under his wing in Port Elizabeth back in 2010. I am sure he will be greatly missed and I hope Calabash finds the strength to continue his legacy.

And thanks should go to you, too, for providing me with the opportunity to meet such a great guy and to take part in such a worthwhile project."

Sue (*Henry Nginza School*)

"I only had a brief acquaintance with Paul but, in that short time, I was impressed by his commitment to the township schools, his contribution to reducing inequality, his vision and his ability to tell things how they really are. He gave me amazing support at the time of a very difficult personal event and I will always remember him with great respect and affection. Paul was a very special person who is greatly missed. It seems unbelievable that he is no longer here."

Carole (*Charles Duna School*)

"I had great respect for Paul when I was out there. Thoughts and prays to his family. Very sad news."

Ellen (*W B Tshume School*)



a hug - Celia & Paul, Joe Slovo School

"I know Paul was not only a partner but a special friend to everyone at people and places. I am absolutely shocked and I'm sure you will be too. I am going to PE [this year], and was hoping to visit the schools, Emmanuel and Missionvale, with Calabash Tours, but it won't be quite the same without Paul in the background. With my best wishes and with sadness,"

Jean (*Missionvale & Emmanuel Community Care Centre*)

"Paul made my stay in Port Elizabeth and my work at W B Tshume so much easier than if he had not been there. I liked him very much and got on with him so well - but then who wouldn't?

This is my favourite recollection - On my last day at WB Tshume in Port Elizabeth they held the customary farewell party for me. I was in an emotional turmoil and fighting back the tears the whole time. I managed well enough until the Senior Choir sang for me. The sheer beauty of their voices and the wonderful harmonies finished me off. I was in tears. I looked across at Paul and his eyes were full of tears as well. 'You too?' I said. He replied that no matter how many times he heard that singing it always affected him that way.

Another great story - On my last evening Paul took me out to dinner at a local restaurant. We talked for hours. At one point he was explaining to me that his young daughter had asked him about Apartheid. He described all the segregation rules. When he had finished his daughter simply asked the question, 'Why?' Then he knew that the new generation of young people would win the battle against prejudice once and for all."

Tony (*W B Tshume School*)

"He was an innovator who put his whole heart in bringing about a better life for so many South Africans post apartheid."

Rita (*Isaac Booie School*)

"He was a lovely man and did such excellent work at Calabash."

Val (*Joe Slovo School*)

"I first met Paul in Oct 2006 when I went as one of the first volunteer teachers to PE. I was struck by his enthusiasm and vision. He wanted to help the people of the townships of PE to help themselves to improve their lives by using the skills of volunteers from abroad. Whatever we did had to be sustainable, we were not there to tell them what to do but to suggest and show different ways of doing things which would be to the advantage of all. Paul was an inspirational person and that first visit was life changing and I returned to Tshume school many times, even bringing my husband along too.

Paul was a great motivator, inspiring those who worked with him and I felt it was a privilege to work with him. I believe his humanitarian ideals will live on and inspire others."

Brenda (*W B Tshume School*)

(and this from Brenda's husband, Barry)

"I remember with affection one incident where I was organising a workshop for teachers interested in teaching art. Paul asked if I needed any materials other than the paint and brushes which I could provide. I asked if he could get six red peppers for the teachers to draw. The person Paul asked to go to the shop could not decide which sort of red paper I wanted and returned confused.

I realised what had happened and we all had a good laugh about it, proving the truth of "it's not what you say but the way that you say it" especially true in South Africa.

Paul's sense of humour was very well developed and will be missed. Thinking about the pepper/paper incident takes a bit of the sadness away."

Barry (*W B Tshume School*)

"Paul was such an inspiring character -- who always brought out the best in everyone. He certainly had that impact on me. He has done so much for communities in the townships -- especially the children."

Richard (*Henry Nginza School*)

"I still can't quite believe it - I sincerely hope that the People and Places team will be able to build upon Paul's legacy and that Calabash is able to continue with its important work."  
Susan (*Emafini School*)

"How can this be? He was such a wonderfully caring person and so involved with the Calabash program. He can never be replaced but I do hope Calabash will continue the good work he started."  
Marina (*Joe Slovo School*)

"He was so full of energy and enthusiasm, a true force for good. He seemed unstoppable in his amazing efforts to bring about change. He crammed so much into his short, rich and enriching life. We count ourselves fortunate to have known him and our hearts go out to his lovely wife and beautiful daughters as well as to Nelson and Xolani and all who not only worked with him but loved him. When we begin to think of them all, we realise that there are far too many to mention. To them and to you we send our sincerest condolences and share in the sorrow of the loss of such a wonderful person."  
Bob & Maggie (*Emafini School*)

"I traveled to South Africa to go to a placement in Normanthamsanga Township and AV Bukani School. It was great to be met off the plane in Port Elizabeth by a friendly member of the Calabash Team. A thorough briefing session about the Township, the school, the hosting family, the programme of visits and opportunities was clearly the result of an enormous amount of thought, hard work and sensitivity. We were issued with a mobile phone and it was clear that any problems or worries if they had arisen would be dealt with quickly and efficiently. I was anxious about the trip as were friends and family at home but Paul was so genuine and caring that I knew straight away I would be "alright". There was a genuine love and respect for him in the school and the township. I learnt so much from him about South Africa, the recent history, the current situation and the ideas behind the Calabash programmes. He and the team were doing an amazing amount for this corner of South Africa. Paul was such a wonderful inspiration, guide and support."  
Diana (*A V Bukani School*)

"I spent only a little time with him but what an inspiring man. I feel so sad to know that he has died so young but it must be so much more painful for all of you who knew him so much better than I."  
Caroline (*W B Tshume School*)

"Paul was such a great man, with a strong heart and a great brain. Both Susan and I have been left a bit windblown at the news. He was so young! It's certainly made both Susan and I commit to making the most of our lives. Life is short and fragile!"  
Louise (*Emmanuel Community Care*)

"Paul was inspirational, I will never forget him. My friend Liz is out in PE helping at the Emmanuel Care Centre (2017). So many volunteers have contacted me, we were all touched by Paul. Do carry on with your wonderful work, it is so important."  
Jenny (*Isaac Booie School*)

"My abiding memory of Paul was his patience and the sincerity of his input to the project. He was always there to offer advice and support."  
Mary (*Emmanuel Community Care*)

"It's tragic that such a passionately committed and charismatic person should leave us so early. I will never forget his kindness, support and motivation when I volunteered in Port Elizabeth at Isaac Booi School in the beginning of 2013. I'm so thankful that I had the great fortune to meet and work with such a wonderful man. He will be so greatly missed."  
Sue (*Isaac Booi School*)

"For me , Paul engendered the new post-apartheid South Africa. Calabash was the best example of respect and love between the black and white communities. His organisation broke down historic barriers. He was first and foremost innovative. He was also motivated, dedicated and creative. He was dedicated to bringing about a more equal South Africa."

Rita (*Isaac Booi School*)

"He will be missed both with you and with the various schools in Port Elizabeth. He was such a lovely man."

Lesley (*Emafini School*)

"I remember fondly my time in Port Elizabeth and how Paul and his staff looked after us all."

Judith (*Henry Nginza School*)

"Paul and I were in personal contact on Facebook, it was a great shock as only days before there was a photo of Paul with one of his daughters after she'd done a Bungi jump. I hope we will be able to make a memorial to Paul - a man of great integrity. I am glad you are committed to continuing the work and the connection with Calabash."

Chris (*Isaac Booi School*)

"I'm lost for words...I send my love and appreciation to you Paul"

Danielle (*Emmanuel Community Care*)

"A role model to all of us who met him, the work he did was invaluable."

Robin (*W B Tshume School*)

"To all those who loved [Paul Miedema](#) and today mourned his passing and celebrated his life:

Try to remember that a good man never dies,  
You will see him many times.  
You will see him in the streets,  
You will see him in the houses,  
In all the places of the town,  
In the vineyards and the orchards,  
In the rivers and the clouds,  
In all the things here that make this  
World for us to live in.  
You will feel him in all things that are  
Here out of love and for love-  
All things that are abundant,  
All things that grow.  
The person of a man may leave-  
Or be taken away-  
But the best part of a good man stays,  
It stays forever.  
Love is immortal  
And makes all things immortal.

Hamba Kahle Paul."

Jenny (*Emafini School*)

"I so don't want this to be true. It's heartbreaking." Eileen (*Henry Nginza School*)

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## Paul was always my role model....

by Dianne

The partnership between *people and places* and Calabash was already well established by the time I came onto the *people and places* team and one of the first visits I made in my role as education advisor was to Port Elizabeth. Paul and I worked well together from the very start and it was immediately apparent how much Paul cared about our partnership work at the different [township schools](#) and at [Emmanuel](#), and how committed he was to using volunteering and tourism as a force for good.



Dianne with Joe Slovoi Principal  
Mr Gqunta - on her most recent visit



Paul was always my role model for what a local partner should be. Whenever I have visited other countries to help set up new partnerships I have found myself using descriptions of the way Paul worked as examples of good practice. Even when I was asking him to do potentially boring administrative work for us, such as updating our [support plans](#) for the projects or chasing questionnaires from the schools, he totally understood the reasons for doing such tasks. With Paul, I feel we had a genuine partnership, all of us on the same wave-length, with each of us contributing our knowledge and ideas to the work we were doing together.

Every volunteer I have met who has volunteered in Port Elizabeth, at [Emmanuel](#) or on the [Schools Support programme](#), has spoken very highly of the support they received from Paul and the Calabash team. They certainly set high standards for others to live up to! I hope Paul realised how very much he was loved and respected.

It is so hard to believe that Paul is no longer here, but I look forward to continuing to work with our partners at Calabash as we continue his work.



The way Paul conducted weekly meetings so impressed me

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## **memories of Paul ... IN CAPS LOCK !**

by Kate

We're proud to have worked with [Calabash](#) since the very beginning of '[people and places](#)' ... and as with any strong relationship, our working relationship was based on mutual trust and learning. Needless to say, our years together had occasional moments of misunderstanding or lack of understanding ... but our mutual strength developed by our working through such moments TOGETHER.

The projects' needs are and always will be our starting point. My role in 'people and places' involves working closely with each individual volunteer to ensure that their placement is a match to those needs ... and that requires prompt exchanges between me and our local partner to provide the volunteer with plenty of information about their placement. I'm the one working 'at the coal face', so to speak ...

Let me tell you a story ...



Once upon a time, as I was working with a volunteer towards a '[schools support](#)' placement in Port Elizabeth, I wrote to Paul asking for specific information about which school, member(s) of staff, timing of the school day, work schedule etc. (*this was years ago, before we'd built our project information & resources to their current levels*) ...

My first email simply asked the questions to which I needed answers ... perfectly polite, sentence case, subject header: 'questions re volunteer [name]' ... When I hadn't received a reply from Paul after a week, I forwarded my original email and wrote my header in CAPS LOCK, continuing with my standard polite, sentence case text ... several days later, still nothing from Paul.

I was beginning to be concerned as to what I should say to the volunteer ... so fired off another email, this time beginning with DEAR PAUL, I AM BECOMING CONCERNED (all in CAPS LOCK!) followed by each of my questions in **BOLD CAPS LOCK**.

Please understand, at that point, I was primarily concerned with being able to communicate with our volunteer, but was also wondering if something had happened at Calabash or in the project which may be impacting on Paul's apparent inability to send the information I needed ... or at least to give me some idea of when I may expect it ...

So, to cut to the chase, I picked up the phone and called him. What a calm opener ... "Hi Paul, good to talk with you - how's things?" Everything, according to Paul, was fine ... so ... gradually I admit to having become less restrained and rather more curt, and (*Sallie will vouch for this, as she was here in the Faversham office at the time!*) my voice was raised to an audio **BOLD CAPS LOCK**.

At which point, Paul most definitely understood not only that I needed his reply, but also why I needed his reply as a matter of urgency if we weren't going to lose this particular volunteer !

I had all the information that I needed within 24 hours ... so I was able to share news with the volunteer and confirm her placement happiness all round.

And, in the long term ... Paul and I joked with each for some time along the lines of ... "shall I call you, Paul?" from me ... and "no worries" from Paul, followed by a full, open and honest email.

From tiny acorns (sometimes disguised as CAPS LOCK), mighty oak trees grow.



## how I became a volunteer with Paul at Calabash

(the following is a story from volunteer, Anke)

Paul and I met more than three years ago, when he left a short message on a *people and places* Facebook post about my volunteer placement in The Gambia. His comment turned out to be the beginning of an exciting chapter of the lives Paul and I shared for a while as colleagues, passionate advocates for responsible tourism and social justice, co-authors, and friends. It seems appropriate telling our story through the medium that brought us together, and adding some bits that sum up a man who truly inspired me and will have a special place in my heart forever.

September 2013-

Paul leaves a comment on Facebook, inviting me to come to PE for my next volunteering trip:



please come to Port Elizabeth

The video of Paul passionately speaking about responsible volunteering at WTM 2012 was the only thing I knew about Paul at that point. He addressed the issues in community volunteering in a way that left no doubt about what irresponsible volunteering looks like – 'inspirational if a little bit scary' as Sallie rightly said above.

[Watch here, Paul starts around min 26:30:](#) I should soon experience myself how inspirational and a little bit scary Paul could be...

Paul's messages, both, from his talk and comment on Facebook stayed in my mind and the idea of working with Calabash started brewing in my head for a couple of month.

January 2014- contacted Kate to see how my skills & knowledge could support Paul and his team. Spoke to Paul a couple of times via Skype to find out what we'd expect from each other during a potential placement. Quickly, we all got excited about the opportunity to be working together for a while. The next thing we know:

9 February 14:



25 February 2014 – excitement rising considerably, topped by the prospect of spending time with Sallie in PE as well:



Somebody else, the wonderful Sallie, shares my excitement being in SA:



9 March 2014- post from my initial impressions and picture of my first day at work with Paul and the team:



Calabash Tours team workshop

11 March - Meeting with the team at Emmanuel Project, a HIV care initiative Calabash supports:

Same day: Paul as one of the Panel speakers at one of Calabash's partner schools, a note of the school's appreciation of support below:



20 March 2014 – my reaction to one of the most productive and beautiful community workshops I ever experienced:

Wow wow wow! This mornings' workshop with potential story tellers from PE townships was such a humbling experience, and inspiring, and motivating. I can only describe it as eye orgasm combined with very productive and positive discussions on how we can make tourism work for local communities. Well done Mongezi Monga Lumka, Nelson Sebezela and Xolani Makalima for making this happen.

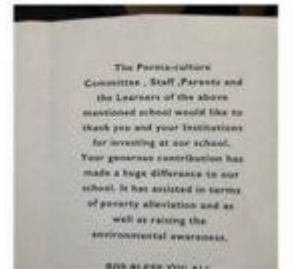
Sep 14- Paul talks about why he chose to work with 'people and places' on his community programme - [here's the link](#)

February 2015 – It took almost a year until we proudly published an article 'The Dilemma of Fair Shares in Township Tourism – A Case Study from Port Elizabeth'

(Click on the 'Download' link [on the left of the page - the article is on Page 4](#))



The process of writing, providing feedback to each other and rewriting was quite a lengthy one. For Paul, every single word had to be scrutinised for its meaning, and he was really hesitant to adapt to a more academic writing style – typical Paul, he felt it had to be said the way it was. We had planned to write and publish more like this together for others to learn and be inspired by Calabash's approach to responsible township tourism. 2015 until recent - delighted seeing Paul's articles being published on Germany's tourism-watch.de website, seeing him becoming a spokesperson for child protection, continuing supporting township schools and other initiatives by linking skilled volunteers to projects, supporting PhD researchers, and still being passionate about sharing a bit of his world with visitors during Calabash's responsible township tours.



February 2017- this story of Paul and I ends here. Beyond the memory snippets above, he was great fun to be around, at least most of the time. I never met somebody like him who could drive one up the wall with his passion for a good debate and stubbornness, while at the same time being very generous explaining things and trying to find solutions. I'm sad beyond words having lost such an inspirational mentor, colleague and friend – travel well Paul.

## Paul defined the word "authentic"



A weekly meeting at A V Bukani School

Paul Miedema changed our lives. It is through Paul that we connected with the [A.V. Bukani Primary School community](#), a wonderful place we now consider our second home.

But Paul did more than connect us – he was our support, our mentor, our ally, and our friend. Just a few weeks ago, we had a long conversation with Paul about a possible sixth volunteer trip to Nomathomsanqa.

Paul defined the word “authentic.” He had no tolerance for BS and never sugar-coated anything. And that is why we absolutely trusted him. We knew he would tell us the truth. How often do you have someone in your life that you can trust like that?

Paul was devoted to two things – his daughters and his country. And they were closely tied together. He worked tirelessly to build a strong South Africa that he could leave for his children, and one that would support everyone’s children because he knew you could not separate the two. A strong South Africa had to promote respect for every person of every background or it would not be a strong country.

Paul is one of those people who truly made a difference in his daily life. Our hearts are breaking that he cannot continue this work. And yet his legacy is the many colleagues he supported within and beyond Calabash, as well as the many volunteers whose eyes he opened and whose hearts he inspired.

You will be missed Paul. Thank you for all you gave to us and everyone around you.

Eileen and Larry

*(frequent volunteers with A.V.Bukani School since 2009)*

## **donations in Paul's memory are pouring in-thankyou-here's how you can help if you wish**

A huge thank you to everyone who has donated to Calabash Trust in Paul's memory. We know how important this money is to help Calabash Trust continue the work Paul started.

We appreciate that many of you reading this newsletter may want to do similar - so here are some ways we can recommend. We know the money you donate will be used well if you use these methods.

Donate to:

[\*\*Calabash Trust here\*\*](#)

[\*\*AV Bukani School here\*\*](#)

[\*\*Joe Slovo School here\*\*](#)

[\*\*Emafini School here\*\*](#)

[\*\*Charles Duna School here\*\*](#)

[\*\*WB Thsume School here\*\*](#)

[\*\*Emmanuel Community Programme here\*\*](#)

And of course - perhaps the greatest way you could help is to volunteer your time and skills with either [\*\*Emmanuel Community Care\*\*](#) or with [\*\*the Schools Support programme in Port Elizabeth\*\*](#) -

Don't walk behind me;  
I may not lead,  
Don't walk in front of me;  
I may not follow,  
Just walk beside me,  
and be my friend.

Albert Camus





If you haven't already spotted our YouTube channel it's worth a look. There are video interviews from volunteers and if you have videos of your time volunteering or one of the talks you have done – we know many of you talk to groups on your return from volunteering – please send them to us so we can share them.

**click the logo and watch Paul talk about why he works with *people and places***



**meet the *people and places* team [here](#)**



[Take a look here at slideshare for slide shows from volunteers](#) – if you have a slide show to share please do send it to us, thanks so much to all the volunteers who have contributed to date.

Remember we are on facebook too - [follow us here](#) – in the blog and on facebook are where we tend to post our latest news.

If you like beautiful pictures and funny visuals we are also on [pinterest – follow us here](#)

and finally we are tweeting too – [follow us here](#)