

# Travels in Blood and Honey

by Elizabeth Gowing

## ***How I came to live in Port Isaac:***

"My father had lived near Wadebridge when he was a boy, and my aunt had been living near Newquay for years, and like so many people my partner Rob and I had long had a dream of living in Cornwall. However, until 2006 our work had been based in London. We were starting to think about having a new adventure when Rob was offered a job as adviser to the Prime Minister of Kosovo. It was a bit of a surprise, and more so because his appointment was a really quick process and 10 days after he was offered the job, our house in London was packed up, and 10 days after that I found myself in Kosovo! The experiences, the hospitality and friendship and - oh yes - the food we had in Kosovo were unforgettable, and we became very close to lots of families, and set up our own charity based in Pristina.

When Rob's contract finished and we returned to England we felt we wanted to do more than just 'move back' to pick up our old life in London; we wondered whether 'moving forward' might mean trying out our Cornwall dream in reality. We made our home in Port Isaac, renting here in 2008 and shortly afterwards buying our own home on The Terrace. I finished the book I had started writing in Kosovo about our experiences there, in particular about what I'd learned becoming a beekeeper, and Rob got a contract for two novels which he started writing while we settled into the village.

In 2010, just as we felt we were happily finding a niche in Port Isaac, Rob was contacted by the Foreign Office and asked whether he'd be interested in returning to Kosovo for a position which had become vacant. It was a really hard decision, but we made a deal with ourselves about coming back to Cornwall, and flew out again to some new adventures in the Balkans."

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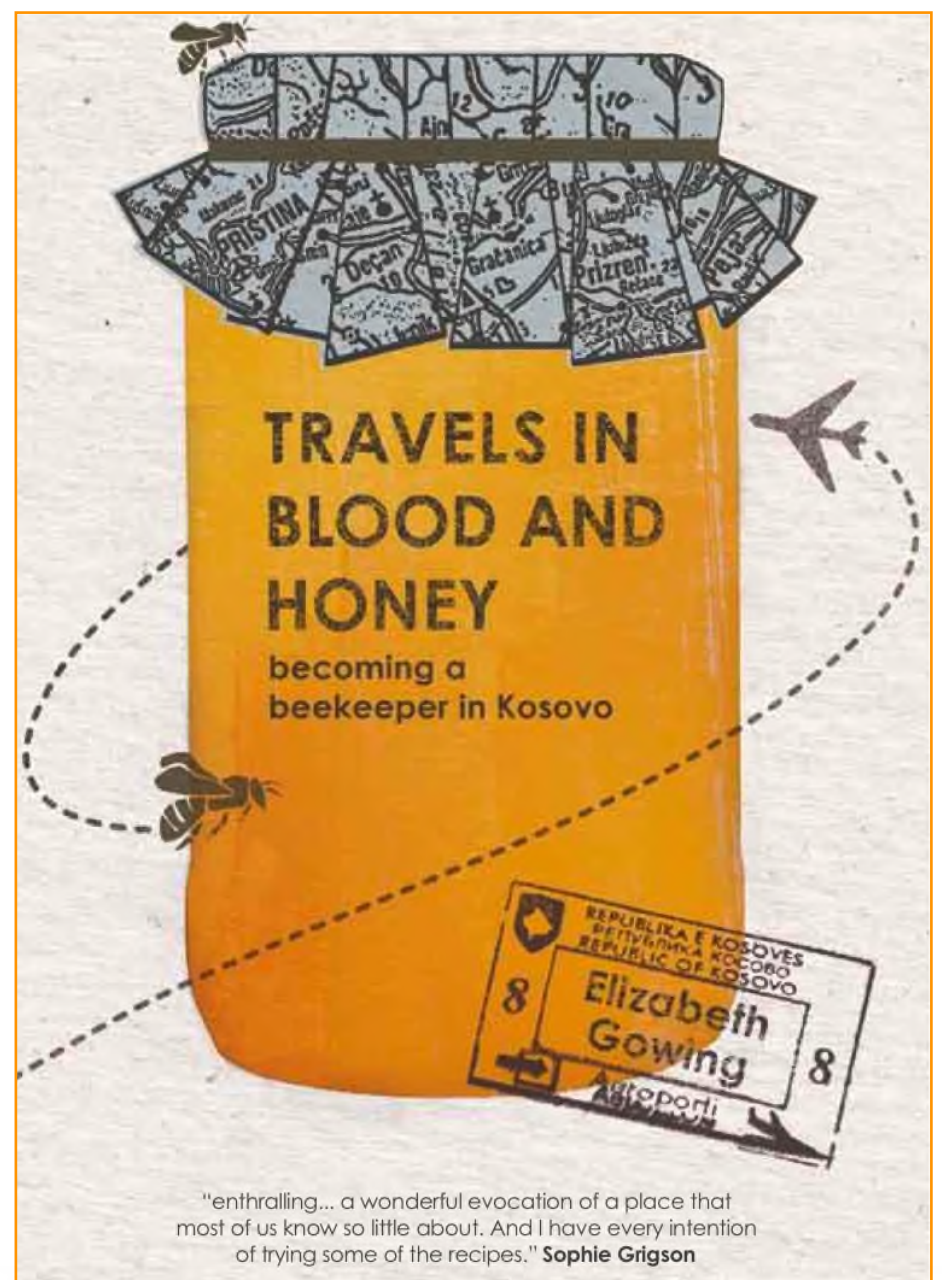
## ***Travels in Blood and Honey - an extract:***

*My first visit to see my bees, together with Rob, who had given me the hive for my birthday, and his colleague, Mr Velija who had helped Rob find a beekeeper who would host the bees on his farm and teach me the craft of looking after them.*

"We started off through the northern suburbs of Pristina. I'd been told that this part of the city has the highest crime rate, so I eyed the streets with suspicion. But it was the usual Kosovan Sunday scene - pixie-faced boys in faded sweatshirts playing ball by the road, shopkeepers twitching at the display of their goods outside, over-filled cars with wedding songs wailing from the stereo, weaving along in good-natured chaos, young women in tight jeans sweeping their front steps or banging rugs out of upstairs balconies, while their mothers-in-law in baggy Turkish-style trousers stood watching them. The houses thinned out and soon each one we passed was set in its own field. By this point in the year the haystacks were dwindling, the single stick which supports each one in the middle was showing - they seemed munched through to the bone. Lean cows tethered in front yards gazed at them sympathetically. And then there was hardly a house to be seen. We were into the wild hills, uncultivated and impenetrable. There are still landmines in Kosovo off major roads, and I thought of them glinting in the undergrowth. I thought of the pixie-faced boys scrambling after their ball.

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My British mobile phone bleeped in my bag. A text message said 'welcome to the Serbian network.' It was ironic - Serbia would claim that I had been



in Serbian territory from the very start of my journey in Pristina; here we were only a few kilometres from the 1999 border. Mr Velija acknowledged what I said with another bit of history. It was on this road that his family fled in 1999. He talked about the roadblocks, the sadism of the paramilitaries who had set them up. We drove on in silence, and I thought about the pixie-faced boys again. It

**You can get a copy of Elizabeth's book by emailing her on [elizabethgowing@hotmail.com](mailto:elizabethgowing@hotmail.com)**