

Images of lost worlds found after 50 years

BY SIMON PARKER

A girl with earlobes stretched to her shoulders, a fingerless old woman and a deserted temple are just a few of the images of lost worlds now on show in Cornwall.

Taken by eminent explorer and author Robin Hanbury-Tenison OBE, the photographs were themselves lost for more than half a century before coming to light again earlier this year.

Mr Hanbury-Tenison, 74, who is regarded as one of the greatest explorers of the 20th century, discovered a bundle of photographic negatives of pictures he took in the 1950s and 1960s in a box at his home in Cardinham on Bodmin Moor. They now form a display at the Eden Project prior to a major exhibition at London's National Theatre next year.

Speaking at the launch of the exhibition and its accompanying book, entitled *Echoes Of A Vanished World: A Traveller's Lifetime In Pictures*, the adventurer explained the story of the long-lost photographs. Sipping a glass of baobab juice, he said: "I have been working on a number of books recently, including one

'It is immensely exciting for me to see the images again'

Robin Hanbury-Tenison OBE

called *The Modern Explorers*, which features a chapter on Kenyan-born Mirella Ricciardi.

"Mirella is a great photographer of Africa and when she came down to Cornwall to see me she was talking about how she'd rediscovered a lot of her old photographs. I took her to meet my neighbour, Graham Ovenden, who is a

world expert on early photography. They started talking about photographs and then both looked at me and asked if I'd kept my early photographs. My immediate reaction was to say 'no' but after a moment's thought I realised they might have survived because I am a great hoarder and keep most things.

"Later that day I rummaged about in some old box files that I'd put away 50 years ago - and there were these little strips of brown paper with negatives inside."

Starting in 1957, the pictures cover a ten-year period during

which the explorer travelled in Ceylon, Burma, Borneo, South America, the Sahara and Indonesia.

"I'd completely forgotten about the images," he said. "So it is immensely exciting for me to see them again and be reminded of the places I visited and the people I met. They are all of things that are no longer there - hence the title of the show."

Mr Hanbury-Tenison said most credit for the success of the enterprise was down to his friend, the artist and photographer Graham Ovenden.

"These snaps have been restored and turned into works of art," he said. "Graham worked his magic on them and 90% of the pleasure people will get from them is as a result of what he has seen in my early pictures."

Mr Ovenden, who also lives at Cardinham, has produced a limited folio edition of the title through his Garage Press, with Booths of Mabe printing

the catalogue version. A selection of the framed photographs - plus a rolling video presentation of the full collection - will be on display at Eden until November 28. An exhibition will then open at the National Theatre on January 14.

"The National Theatre is

giving me the entire lobby of the Olivier Theatre for two months and I'm told about 250,000 people will pass through it during that time," said Mr Hanbury-Tenison.

A founder and president of Survival International, Mr Hanbury-Tenison has enjoyed an adventurous life, travelling to Africa, Asia and South America in the days before mass tourism changed civilisations forever.

In 1957, he set out to make the first overland drive from London to Ceylon in a battered Second World War Jeep. Thereafter he travelled by cargo boat, through Indo-China to Borneo and worked his pas-

sage across the Pacific. During the journey he wandered through Persia, Afghanistan and India. He later became the first person to complete a land crossing of South America.

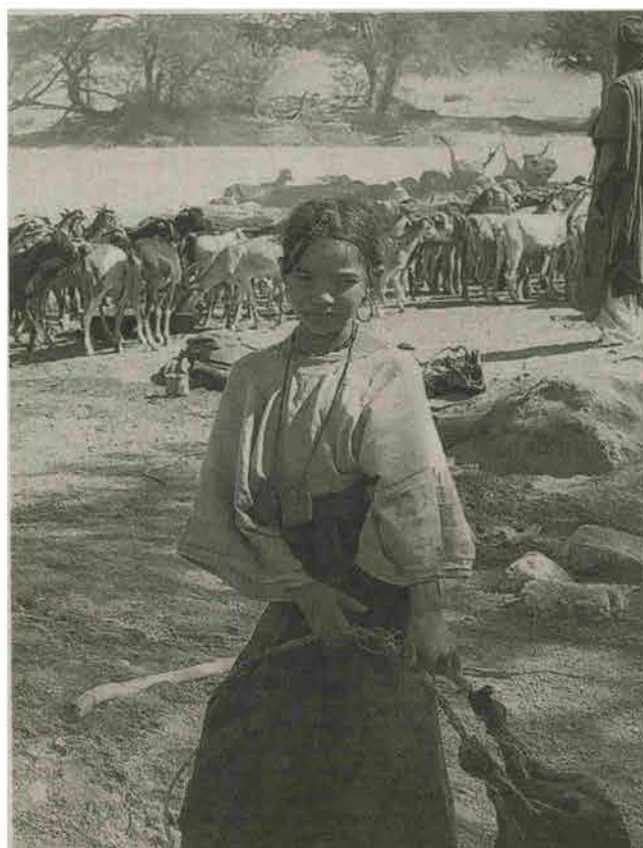
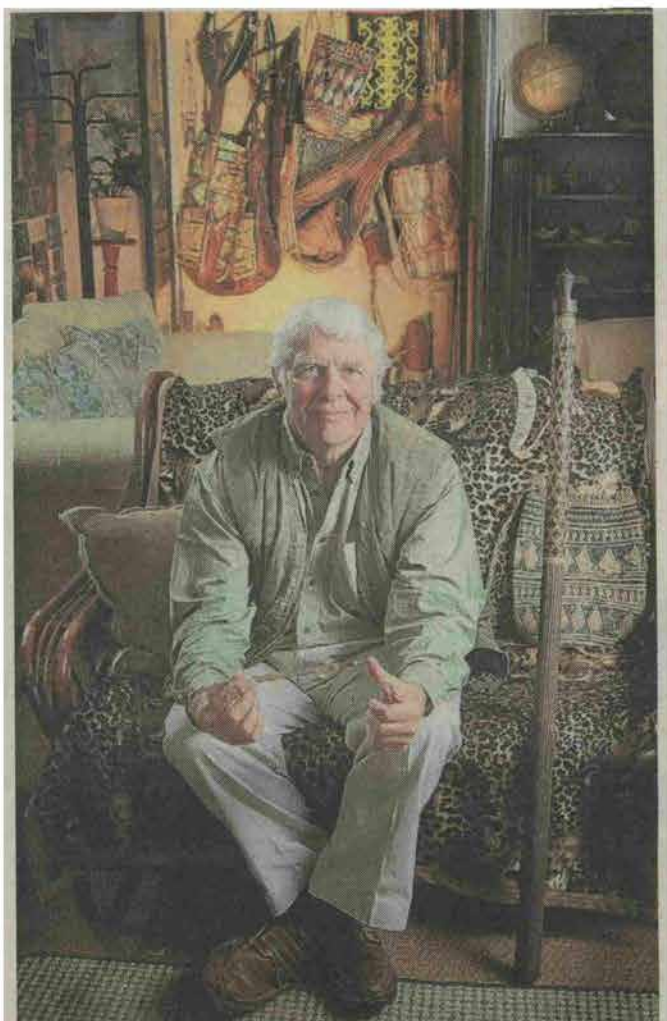
During his explorations, he always carried a camera, recording people and places. The National Gallery exhibition also includes artefacts and objects collected on his travels.

Joanne Harris, the author of *Chocolat* and *Blackberry Wine*, has provided a foreword for the book, in which she writes: "His images speak directly to us in a voice that is fresh and clear. There is nothing self-conscious or patronising about his photographs, or his prose.

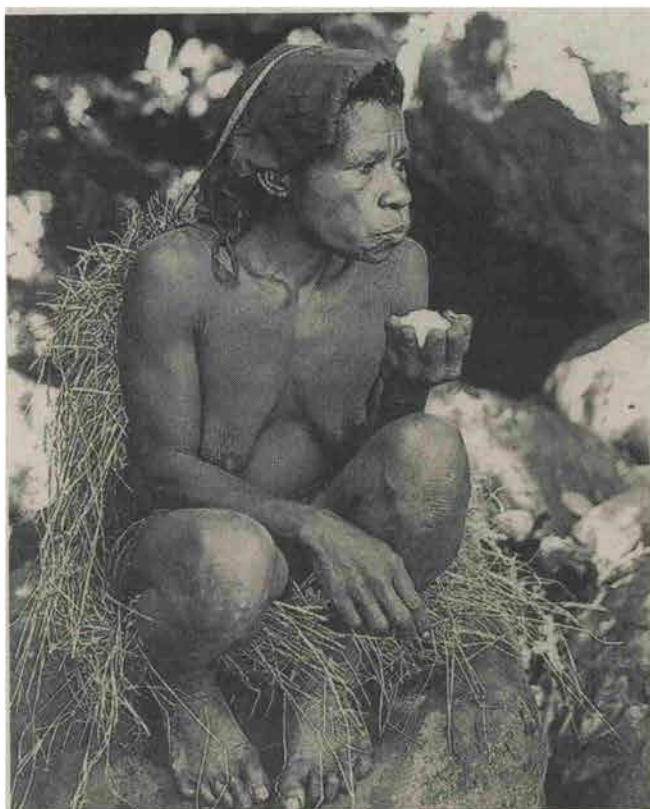
"Instead, there is deep admiration, a sense of wonder, respect and a desire to share what he sees with a world that has grown increasingly out of touch with the things that really matter. It is a reminder of what we share, as human beings, with the rest of the world."

Echoes Of A Vanished World: A Traveller's Lifetime In Pictures, by Robin Hanbury-Tenison, is published by Garage Press in hardback at £34.99 and £14.99 in paperback (plus P&P). It is available from www.robinsbooks.co.uk





The explorer with artefacts from his travels, above, and some of the images he has recently rediscovered
PICTURE OF ROBIN: EMILY WHITFIELD-WICKS





The negatives of the black and white photos featured in Robin Hanbury-Tenison's book, *Echoes Of A Vanished World*, were unearthed in a forgotten box file in the explorer's house