



Western Cape Numismatic Society

Seven short questions to a Fellow Collector

Question 1: Tell us about yourself.

My name is Johan Potgieter. I am married to Janine who home schools our three teenage boys. I am an actuary and head up my own company specialising in the quantification of damages claims. We live in Somerset West.



Question 2: How and when did you become interested in collecting?

I have always collected coins and banknotes from the countries I have travelled to, but things really changed during the COVID-19 lockdown. My boys, Joel and Sean, were already very active and knowledgeable collectors at that time and were also buying and selling on the side. I was fascinated by how they navigated the field and how unfazed they were when auctions didn't go their way. By contrast, I remember being quite upset after losing my first Bidorbuy auction — it revealed a level of emotion I didn't quite know I had!

Question 3: What did you collect in the beginning?

My first proper purchase was a gold sovereign in MS — a beautiful coin that I still have today. Initially, I wasn't very focused or disciplined and bought a number of coins that I now look at and wonder "why?". I have since been refining my collection and letting some of those go.

Question 4: What do you collect now, and why?

The late Waldo Human had a significant influence on my collecting when he shared how he focuses on very specific areas. Since then, I have narrowed my interests considerably.

I initially focused on ZAR coins and patterns and have largely completed what I set out to do there — unless I extend the bond on the house! I generally prefer proof coins over circulation coins simply because I find them more aesthetically appealing. I have several highly graded proof sets, including 1923, 1931, 1937, 1944, and 1945, among others, although I don't intend to complete the full run.

My main focus now is South African circulation banknotes. I am down to the last three notes needed to complete the set: the two Clegg £100 notes issued and the first issue Clegg £20. Pre-Reserve Bank notes and emergency currency (Mafikeng, Upington Border scouts, etc) are also a fascinating field, and I continue to collect in that area. I also enjoy Gouvernements notes, with plenty of inspiration from Johan Gouws — I need just two more to complete that set.

As a side interest, I also collect shipwreck coins, mostly South African, aiming to have at least one good, graded example (NGC Shipwreck certification and attributable to the specific wreck) from as many South African shipwrecks as possible.

Question 5: What is the biggest challenge you currently face with your collection?

The availability of the "last few notes" and, of course, budget constraints. Some of these notes have simply never appeared at auction.

Question 6: What advice would you give to new collectors?

Enjoy the story and the pursuit — you will find treasures in very unexpected places. Stay focused and decide early on what you would like to collect.

Question 7: If you were to take up a new hobby, what would it be?

There are many things I would love to pursue. One of my sons has immersed himself in the fascinating world of rare succulents, and it's remarkable how rare and sought-after some of these are and where the journey takes one to see them in the wild. That said, I would probably choose to have more time to read the many coin books my boys have collected over the years.
