Western Cape Numismatic Society

Under the distinguished patronage of Alderman Geordin Hill-Lewis,
Mayor of the City of Cape Town

Seven short questions to a Fellow Collector

Question 1: Tell us about yourself.

My name is Alexander Horrell. I was born in Cape Town and I have lived here my whole life. I am currently a grade 11 student at Bishops Diocesan College in Rondebosch.

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

I started collecting with my dad Hamish at the start of Covid. I think I've always been interested by coins as I've had a small box of coins lying around the house for as long as I can remember. I've always been fascinated by history and geography and collecting coins gave me a medium through which to explore that.

Question 3: What did you collect in the beginning?

I started by collecting coin sets, a set of coins from a country with certain denominations within a particular date range (e.g. South Africa 10c, 20, 50c, R1, R2, R5). These were relatively easy and cheap to put together, which helped as I didn't have a huge budget. Today, I still have just as much fun collecting these as I do collecting expensive coins.

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

I am currently trying to collect a coin from each country and territory of the world. As of the time of writing, I only have 5 countries/territories left to go. Furthermore I collect all coins from the Southern and Eastern African countries as well as other countries that I find interesting. Some of my favourite country sets to collect are British territories and dependencies, with my favourites being Jersey, Guernsey and St. Helena.

Although collecting coins can be a great investment, for me is has always been a fun hobby, which is why I collect what I find most interesting. I enjoy collecting cheap coins just as much as I do collecting rare ones. Coin collecting is so much more than just the coins themselves, and they are a great way to learn about places and people from around the world.

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

Finding coins from obscure countries in South Africa has always been tricky, especially when trying to collect a coin from each country. You can of course always buy coins internationally through sites like Ebay, but sometimes most of the fun is in digging through an old tub of coins hoping to find the one you are looking for.

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

Before you even buy your first coin, research. Researching is crucial to understanding which coins are valuable or rare, which can help you spot bargains if you know what to look for.

Secondly, it is important to document your collection so that you know what you have and what you are looking for. Personally, I upload my coins to Numista and I use spreadsheets as easy lookup tables when I'm out and about.

Start collecting with cheaper, easily accessible coins as it allows you to get a better understanding of the hobby before you decide to make a big purchase.

Don't underestimate your local flea markets or antique stores as you might just find a bargain if you know what to look for.

Once again, you don't have to collect expensive or rare coins to enjoy the hobby. Coin collecting is just supposed to be fun!

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

It's important to have a good balance of hobbies and I've always thought I could expand on my creative side through something like songwriting or painting.