



Western Cape Numismatic Society

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

Western Cape Annual General Meeting 21 February 2026

Speech Honouring Brian Hearn — Honorary Life Membership

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, fellow collectors, scholars, and friends.

It is a great honour and privilege to stand before you today as we recognise a man whose name is woven permanently into the fabric of South African numismatics — Brian Hearn.

This evening, as we present Brian with Honorary Life Membership of the Western Cape Numismatic Society, it feels fitting that we reflect not only on his professional achievements, but also on the remarkable life behind them.

Some of the most beautiful and personal reflections on Brian's journey were written by his daughter, who shared the story of how it all began.

In the early 1960s, Peter Bowles placed an advert in a newspaper seeking farthings dated between 1923 and 1941. The response was so great that Brian's father stepped in to assist him. It was during this time that Brian acquired two long proof sets for just twenty-five to thirty rand each — pieces that today are worth thousands. That moment sparked what would become a lifelong passion.

In the early 1980s, Brian joined P&G Coins, where he faced a defining decision — whether to remain a collector, or to dedicate himself fully as a numismatist. Thankfully for all of us, he chose the path of scholarship and service.

During his time there, he authored the catalogue Trends, a publication that would guide and educate collectors throughout the country. He worked closely with the late Dr Morris and served for many years as secretary of the Transvaal Numismatic Society. He also helped establish the South African Numismatic Society, again serving faithfully as secretary.

In 1988, Brian opened The Coinshoppe in Roodepoort, creating not just a business, but a centre for collectors and the numismatic community. In the early 1990s, he authored the first Hearn's Handbook, and over the decades that followed, he produced catalogues covering coins, banknotes, medallions, and tokens — works that remain essential references to this day.

His dedication has been recognised with numerous awards, including two Lifetime Achievement Awards — honours richly deserved.

But beyond his professional accomplishments, Brian's daughter reminds us of the man himself.

A devoted family man. A lover of dogs. A man once surrounded by pipe smoke, and known to leave functions early with the simple excuse that he had to go home and feed his dogs.

In 2014, he underwent a quadruple bypass — which, in true Brian fashion, he seemed to overcome with remarkable determination.

In 2019, he faced one of his greatest challenges. Hospitalised for six months and in a coma for weeks, he fought his way back, relearning how to speak, walk, and live independently again. Even then, his spirit never dimmed — a nurse reportedly had to ban him from quiz sessions because he answered the questions too quickly.

Today, at 87 years old, Brian still tends to his garden, surrounded by his beloved dogs, and continues updating his catalogues — typing carefully, two fingers at a time — still contributing, still teaching, still serving the numismatic community he helped build.

Brian, your life's work has shaped generations of collectors. Your catalogues have guided us. Your scholarship has educated us. Your service has strengthened the very foundations of numismatics in South Africa.

On behalf of the Western Cape Numismatic Society, and indeed the entire South African numismatic community, we thank you.

Thank you for your knowledge.

Thank you for your dedication.

Thank you for your resilience.

And thank you for your lifetime of service to numismatics.

It is with the greatest respect and admiration that we award you Honorary Life Membership of the Western Cape Numismatic Society.

Brian, this honour is not only well deserved — it is long overdue.

Thank you.

Delivered by Dillon Bassani