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## Obituary - Ronald Mark Greig

7.11.1927 - 16.06.2001



Ron Greig was a South Australian numismatist whose high standing was acknowledged Australia-wide and throughout most of the English speaking world. He was liked and respected by those he came into contact with and during his lifetime did much to advance the cause of numismatics.

Ron joined the Numismatic Society of South Australia in 1954 and remained an active and supportive member for the rest of his life. He was elected president of the Society in 1956, only two years after joining, and became secretary in 1958. Ron went out of his way to welcome new members and not only became a friend to many but also continued to encourage members in their collecting over the years. His suggestion that we ask a London dealer to send over quantities of coins on approval, enabled members to obtain Greek, Roman and medieval coins which were not available in any other way locally, at the time. Ron was meticulous in his work as secretary and as a member of council. He served the Numismatic Society of South Australia as presi-

dent on four occasions and became assistant editor of its publication, the *Australian Numismatic Journal*.

He wrote many articles for that journal, the first of these dealing with South African War Medals. At the time he joined the Society, he indicated that his main collecting interest was the copper coins of England. But over the years, Ron enjoyed taking up a specific area at a time, tended to specialise in that area to such an extent that he became recognised as a world authority in that area and then moved on to a new challenge. Among the areas he collected and delved into were the coins of Alexander III of Scotland, William the Conqueror pennies, the Gun Money of Ireland, the coins of Roman Britain, Australian ferry tokens, and towards his end, Australian Nursing badges.

An interest in his Presbyterian background led him to collect and research Australian communion tokens. Ron was a pioneer in this field because up to that time no systematic collecting or research of these tokens had been done in this country. The result of

this work was the publication of *Communion Tokens: Australian, New Zealand and Miscellaneous Series*, which he co-authored with Harry Robinson of New Zealand and Bill Woodside of the United States (both now deceased).

He also helped the late John Gartner with his *Catalogue of Australian Coins*.

In recognition of his services to the Numismatic Society of South Australia, Ron was awarded an inaugural Paul Simon Memorial Award, given for services to organized numismatics in Australia. Ron was also made an Honorary Life Fellow of that society and eventually, its Patron.

Ron also became Honorary Advisor on numismatics at the Art Gallery of South Australia. Here he was forthright and outspoken about protecting the integrity of the State numismatic collection. He was always acutely aware of the risks involved in sending material such as irreplaceable dies beyond the direct control of the Art Gallery of South Australia. When the Royal Australian Mint asked for the Adelaide Assay Office dies, Ron vigorously maintained that this was too great a risk to take. His sound advice was ignored, however, and the dies were sent to Canberra with most unfortunate results.

Ron formed a life-long friendship with curator Bill Woodside and began sending him numismatic material for his museum, thus becoming, in effect, an enthusiastic collector for the Carnegie Museum. As a result the museum acquired a significant collection of Australian coins and communion tokens. Regrettably all this hard labour-of-love was destroyed when the numismatic section of the museum was sold off. Ron naturally felt betrayed by the actions of the museum administration—interested only in making

the museum *more viable*—especially as no consultation with the donors of the material had taken place. Ron felt very strongly that public repositories should be obliged to always fully consult the donors of material as well as the public, before considering selling off any part of their collection. Ron was also responsible for donating one of the rarest South Australian communion tokens to the Smithsonian Institution numismatic cabinet.

Ron was a scholar and also a champion of scholarship. He was appointed the examining officer in South Australia for the field of numismatics for the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Ron built up a useful numismatic library himself and also encouraged other collectors to always look beyond the superficial accumulating of items and enrich their hobby by reading and researching widely.

The number of times Ron addressed members of the South Australian society with papers and articles was very considerable. His audience would always be captivated by his enthusiastic and charismatic presentations which reflected extensive background preparation and research done at home or in the State Library.

The numismatic world has suffered a considerable loss with the passing of Ron Greig. To all his family we extend our sincere sympathy and assure them that Ron will always have a warm place in the hearts of his fellow numismatists.

As a token of respect and appreciation, the Numismatic Society of South Australia has renamed its annual president's award for the best numismatic lecture *The Ron Greig Award*.

Maurice B. Keain