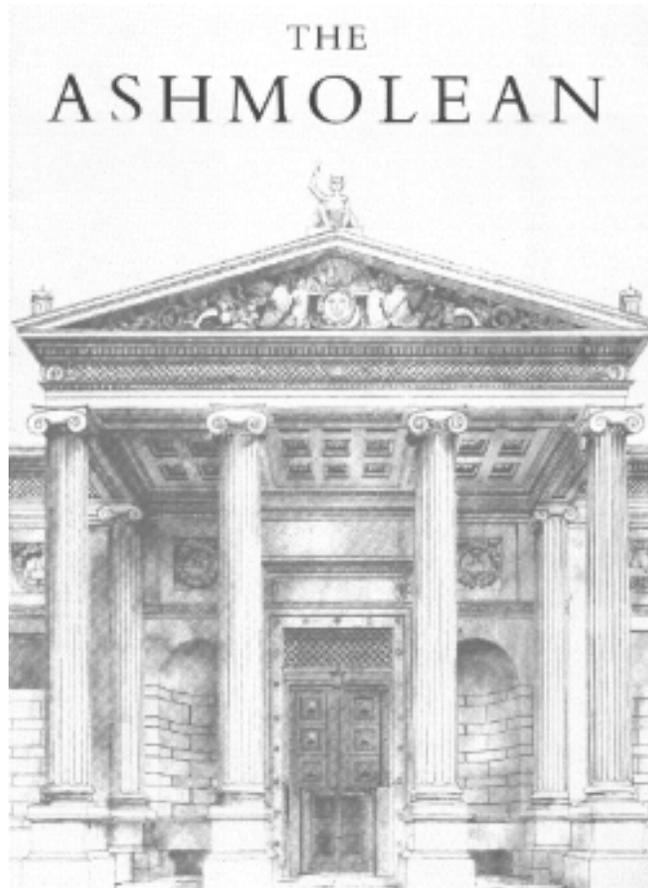


Survey of Colombian Cobs in Major English Museums - Ashmolean

Herman Blanton, Mount Vernon, OH, NI# LM115



The University of Oxford is England's oldest, without a clear founding date, the year 1096 is considered the year Oxford became a center of higher education. The oldest University has the oldest museum in England, the Ashmolean, founded in 1683 and is well worth a visit. Since 1922 the museum coin collection has been housed in the Heberden Room. The keeper of the Ashmolean's 335,000 coins is Dr. Nicholas Mayhew.

Through prior arrangement, Dr. Mayhew graciously granted me access to study the museum's collection. Dr. Mayhew and museum assistant Mrs. Roslyn Britton-Strong generously aided my inspection of the collection. My collecting interest is silver cobs from Colombia, which are hand hammered coins from the 17th & 18th century mints of Santa Fe de Bogotá (also known as Nuevo Reino de Granada) and Cartagena. While the collection is not strong in Latin America, I wanted to survey it to see what they have, as Colombian silver cobs are quite rare. The collection has one Colombian cob, it being a very nice gold 2 escudos of Philip V.

2 escudos, 1721/0 assayer M (for Miguel Molano), weight is 6.28 grams. The museums accession number is “NT Moodie April 1977”. Numismatic catalog references are R/L M80-4, C&T 360b and is unlisted in Cayón. The Ashmolean’s coin is very similar to one plated in Restrepo/Lasser, the cross side is nearly identical.

The coin I found most interesting is a Mexico 8 reales “klippe”, a machine struck coin on an irregular shaped planchet. Dated 1733 MF the coin is in EF or better condition but is not particularly remarkable if it were not for an inscription engraved along the edge of the coin. The inscription is placed entirely around the six sided edge of the coin and reads as follows.

This Piece was Taken at | Porto | Bello | by |
Edward Vernon Esq^r. On the 22^d. of November 1739

The coin is engraved on all six sides of the edge, separation indicated above by the vertical symbol (|). The Ashmolean’s accession number is “Douce 1834” having come to the museum in 1834.

It seems this coin is a memento of the attack by the British on the Spanish city of Puerto Bello (Porto Bello in English) by Admiral Edward Vernon in 1739, only 6 years after the coin was struck. Vernon was successful in capturing Puerto Bello in 1739 and England celebrated with a great issue of souvenir medals proclaiming the victory “with six ships only”. Admiral Vernon returned to Spanish America in 1740/1 to attack Cartagena, this time he came with 186 ships, 2,070 canon and 23,600 ground forces. The Spanish Fort was successfully defended by Admiral Don Blas de Lezo with a force of only 3,000 men, denying Vernon of victory. Due to a premature and erroneous announcement, the British again issued a great number of souvenir medals, wrongly proclaiming victory. For further information see the references cited at the end of this article.

Islamic Coins and Roman Coins

The Ashmolean museum is actively creating a “*Sylloge of Islamic Coins in the Ashmolean*” which will be placed on their internet web server. The server will host images as well as text. Look forward to this going on line late in 2001 or early 2002. “*Roman coins of Carausius and Allectus*” is another internet resource under construction by the museum. Look for this to go online in mid to late 2002. For reference the web site address for the Ashmolean is <http://www.ashmol.ox.ac.uk/>

Works cited.

- Adolfo, Clemente and Juan Cayón Herrero. 1998. *Las Monedas Españolas, Del tremis al euro. Del 411 a nuestros días*. Madrid: FARESO, S.A.
- Calicó, Ferrán, Xavier Calicó and Joaquín Trigo. 1998. *Las Monedas Españolas desde Fernando e Isabel a Juan Carlos I, Años: 1474 a 1998*. Barcelona: Graficas Reclam, S.A.

Restrepo, Jorge Emilio and Joseph R. Lasser. 1998. *Macuquinas de Colombia, (The Cobs of Colombia, South America)*. Medellín: by author.

Related works concerning Admiral Vernon and the Vernon medals

Betts, Wyllys C. 1894. *American Colonial History Illustrated by Contemporary Medals*. New York: Scott Stamp and Coin Company. Reprinted 1964
Winnipeg: Canadian Numismatic Publishing Institute, div. of The Regency
Coin and Stamp Co. Ltd.

Ford, Douglas. 1907. *Admiral Vernon and the Navy*. London: T. Fisher Unpin.

The author reserves the right to publish elsewhere. Image is reproduced with permission of the Ashmolean.