

Survey of Colombian Cobs in Major English Museums - Fitzwilliam

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A report on my study trip to the grand Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge University. Dr. Mark Blackburn, Coin Keeper, generously allowed me access to museum's 115,000-piece coin collection for study. This is part of my survey of Colombian silver cobs. I was privileged to work with world-renowned specialist Prof. Ted Buttrey, Dr. Martin Allen and research assistant Sarah Ward. The three made my visit enjoyable as well as fruitful.

The collection has four cobs that I attribute to the Nuevo Reino mint in Bogotá, 3 gold and 1 silver. The gold cobs are stored in Cabinet 406, tray 13.



**4 Escudos, Philip V, 13.5 grams, likely assayer M based on style
Catalog number R/L M82-4, C&T type 57, Cayón type 139**



**2 Escudos, Philip V, 6.75 grams assayer M for Molano
Mint Mark "F" to left of shield, Assayer "M" to right of shield.
Catalog number R/L M80-12, C&T type 83, Cayón type 125**



**1 Escudo, Philip V, 3.39 grams, assayer M for Molano, (17)42, 7 in form of a star
Catalog number R/L M78-12, C&T 498, Cayón 8967**

Nuevo Reino gold cobs of this era, late 1600s – early 1700s, have distinctive characteristics that assist in identification. The shield is of the Hapsburg design, even though the Bourbons rose to power starting with Philip V. The top left section of the shield contains a box with 4 rectangular quadrants, top left and bottom right containing Castles and the remaining two containing Lions, for united kingdoms of Castile & Leon. The common error for Nuevo Reino, that of swapping location of Castles and Lions is evident on all three of these coins. The Castles should be in top left and bottom right boxes, but all three of these coins have them swapped. Another distinctive feature for Nuevo Reino is the omission of the vertical lines for kingdom of Aragon, which should be placed to the immediate right of Castile & Leon. As can be seen in these photos, Aragon is omitted, with the cross (X) of Naples & Sicily adjacent to Castile and Leon, most clearly seen on the 2 escudos above. The third distinctive design feature of Nuevo Reino gold cobs is located on the reverse, or cross side. Colombian gold cobs have a lily flower, or “fleur de lis” in French, between each member in the cross (Burzio Vol I, p. 104). These very often look like a pair of scissors, see the 4 Escudos and 2 Escudos above.



Nuevo Reino, Philip V, 1 Real, 1721, assayer Buena Ventura de Arce, 2.32 grams

Late style pillars and wave design. Arce was assayer between 1692 and 1722. According to Barriga (Vol I, p. 122), mint records show that no silver coins were struck in the year 1721, but this is not conclusive as there is an 8 reales of 1721 known, and coins are known for other years when mint records show no silver coins struck, such as 1676 by assayer Olmos (Lasser p. 129). The discovery of this piece in the museum was a most pleasant surprise. It is struck on an unusually broad flan whereas most issues of this series are struck on small thick planchets. The broad flan, 24 mm – 25 mm, permitted space for full presentation of the coin design.

Obverse: **PHILIP(PVS V • DG)** crowned arms of Castile & Leon with pomegranate at bottom.

Reverse: **HISPANIARVM REX • 1721** and **PLV SVL N^oR^o** on three lines between columns. **F** to left of columns, **S** to right of columns.

This is truly a remarkable coin due to its large flan, good preservation and rarity.

Online Projects at the Fitzwilliam

[The Early Medieval Corpus Project](#)

<http://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/Coins/emc.html>
(Coin Finds in Britain 410-1180, with images and maps)

A project to gather together into a single database all of the single finds of coins minted 410-1180 found in the British Isles. There are several thousand such coins, mostly Anglo-Saxon and Norman, but with a smattering of Frankish, Byzantine, even Arabic, and hundreds more are found every year. The EMC is the first attempt to collect all of the coins from the whole period (many of them previously unpublished) and present them in an easily accessible and searchable form.

[Online List of Numismatic Sales Catalogues](#)

<http://131.111.22.5/coins/salec.html>

This collection exists as a research tool. Its scope is universal, covering all areas and periods, and including sales not only of coins but of other numismatic materials: paper money, tokens, medals, decorations, balances and weights, engraved gems. Two purposes are served by putting this list online: it enables people to see which catalogues they can consult in the Fitzwilliam, and it also shows which catalogues they do not now have. They would be very interested in hearing from people who have catalogues not on this list, who might be willing to sell or exchange – the museum has about 1,500 duplicate catalogues they would be prepared to exchange in return. Please contact Professor T. V. Buttrey (phone +44 (0)1223 332915, fax +44 (0)1223 351156, email tvb1@hermes.cam.ac.uk) for more information.

Works cited.

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