Establishing the Etruscans in the 18th century
James Byres and the Definition of the Etruscans

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James Byres was born in 1734, the son of a staunch Jacobite, at Tonley in the parish of Tough, Aberdeenshire. Like many others, he and his father left Scotland after the '45; and we find James in Rome by 1756 or 1758. Reading between such lines as there are, it looks as though he was faced fairly early in the 1760s with the economic facts of life. If he wanted to stay in Rome, as he clearly did, he would have to earn his living – but how? He could paint, apparently, and he could design buildings: but, then and there, he was not alone in this; nor do we have any reason to believe that he was outstanding in either sphere. But there was another, and perhaps more certainly remunerative, activity that was open to a respectable young expatriate who had had time to find his feet in the cultural milieu of 18th-century Rome. He could join the ranks of the antiquaries, those remarkable men who guided Grand Tourists around the ruins of the Eternal City. They introduced their clients to the Roman aristocracy, so that they could see the paintings and sculptures in the noble palazzi; they arranged for their clients to purchase their antiquities from ‘good’ dealers, and to acquire their paintings (and commission their portraits) from ‘good’ artists. When the time came for the visitor to move on, his indefatigable antiquary arranged for the antiquities and paintings he had bought to be sent home. Until the middle of the century, antiquarian business had largely been in the hands of Italians: but the demand for antiquarian services was growing – from Scotland and indeed from America as well as from England. Given their success in their chosen profession, it is not surprising that John Ingamells observes (1996: 28) that although Thomas Jenkins (see below) and Byres had ‘begun in Rome by underachieving as artists’, they were both ‘[h]ard-headed and distinguished by commercial flair’.

Byres in Rome

By 1764, then, James Byres had become an antiquary; and until 1790 he combined the profession of leading cicerone-introdotore-antiquario to English-speaking visitors in Rome with dealings in antiquities and paintings. It is safe to assume that these activities enabled Byres to afford not only a comfortable style of life in Rome, invariably within easy reach of the Piazza di Spagna (Ford 1974a: 456), but also the pursuit of an authentic intellectual interest in the past. The inventory of the contents of his house in the Strada Paolina, drawn up on the eve of his departure from Rome in 1790, included a well-stocked library of nearly 500 volumes and 100 pamphlets (Coen 2002: 164–5; and 173–4, notes 82–97 for a selection of titles).

The sometimes remarkable spelling employed in the Byres manuscript material that I have read (Ridgway 1989) is redolent of a distinct Aberdonian accent (so too Ingamells 1996: 28); even so, and even if this was (rightly) regarded as indicative of Jacobite sympathies, the majority of Byres’ clients

Figure 1 James Byres and his family in Rome, c. 1775–1778, by Franciszek Smuglewicz. From left to right: Byres’ sister, Isabella (Mrs Robert Sandilands); James Byres (with map of Rome); his father, Patrick Byres; his mother, Janet Byres (née Moir); Christopher Norton (Byres’ business partner in Rome, who executed the engravings finally published by Frank Howard in 1842). © Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, inv. no. PG 2601
had no reason to regard him as a social inferior. And some at least of them will have recognized – perhaps with varying degrees of appreciation – that his intellectual interests were significantly wider and deeper than those of his rivals. He was in friendly and productive contact with his Roman contemporaries Giovanni Battista Piranesi and Johann Joachim Winckelmann, as well as with Sir William Hamilton, the British Envoy Extraordinary to the court of Naples from 1764 until 1800. At the same time, one senses the existence of a somewhat less happy relationship between Byres and Edward Gibbon, by common consent one of the outstanding intellects of the 18th century. There is certainly no reason to believe that, during his relatively brief sojourn in Rome (1764–1765), Gibbon was in any sense inspired to write The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire (1776–1788) by contact with ‘[m]y guide ... Mr Byres [sic], a Scotch antiquary of experience and taste’ – a description perceptively defined by Coen (2002: 166) as ‘un epitaffio solo in apparenza benevolo’. On the contrary, Gibbon wrote ‘in the daily labour of 18 weeks the powers of attention were sometimes fatigued, till I was myself qualified in a last review to select and study the capital works of ancient and modern art’ (Radice 1984: 142). Gibbon himself, one of the first of the many clients who engaged Byres’ antiquarian services, leaves us in no doubt as to the place and date of the crystallization of his decision to proceed with his great work:

it was the view of Italy and Rome which determined the choice of the subject. In my Journal the place and moment of conception are recorded; the fifteenth of October 1764, in the close of evening, as I sat musing in the Church of the Zoccolanti or Franciscan friars, while they were singing Vespers in the Temple of Jupiter on the ruins of the Capitol (Radice 1984: 143).

Nevertheless, Byres can at least be credited with facilitating Gibbon’s practical acquaintance with the Eternal City. Paolo Coen (2002: 164) has astutely diagnosed the extent to which Byres’ various activities were interconnected:

[i]n Byres, dunque, il trafficante d’arte convive in perfetta armonia con il pittore, l’architetto, il cicerone e l’antiquario, venendo anzi a formare una sorta di circolo virtuoso ove ciascuna attività sostiene l’altra
[and so in Byres the art dealer lives in perfect harmony with the painter, the architect, the guide and the antiquarian, all coming together in a kind of virtuous circle where one activity supports another.]

It seems reasonable to add that Byres’ commercial interests could also be pursued in such a way as to benefit what in modern parlance we can define as his personal research, and vice versa. A good example is the ‘jaunt to Sicily’ that he undertook in 1766 in the company of a certain Mr Wilbraham (Ridgway 1989: 221–3). Although the ostensible purpose of this was to show his companion (who was presumably underwriting the cost of the trip) the classical antiquities of south Italy and Sicily, Byres’ own journal devotes far more space to natural phenomena – notably the search for ‘petrifications’ (fossils) and vestiges of the Deluge – culminating in a meticulous study of the behaviour of Mount Etna. Their itinerary has much in common with that followed by Sir William Hamilton on an official visit to Sicily in 1769 (Fothergill 1969: 94–100), and the inventory of Byres’ property in Rome includes ‘Sir William Hamilton’s letters on the earthquakes of Calabria [in 1783; Fothergill 1969: 182–6], tied up with several physical pamphlets’ – probably copies of Hamilton’s printed communications to the Royal Society (Ridgway 1989: 222 note 25).

It is quite possible that Byres’ interest in volcanoes was stimulated by what seems to be his first meeting with Hamilton, at the outset of his 1766 trip with Wilbraham. By then, after no more than two years in the proximity of Vesuvius, Hamilton’s interest in volcanic phenomena was already well established; as is well known, it was destined to figure largely in his scientific thinking, and in his list of publications. The latter are characterized by an insistence on autopsy and accurate recording, as distinct from interpretation and the creation of hypothetical ‘systems’, which means that his records of the Vesuvian eruptions (communicated to the Royal Society) can still be accepted as reliable (Buchner 1986: 170–2; Knight 1990: 109–80; Thackray 1996). Byres, on the other hand, had no hesitation in wrestling with the wider implications of the natural phenomena that he observed, and still less in discussing them with anyone who would listen. At least one potential client, Mrs Piozzi (formerly Mrs Thrale, the confidante of Samuel Johnson), was scandalized by his ‘infidel’ views on ‘the Eternity of the Earth or at least an Antiquity of 50,000 Years’: her reaction was probably not unique, and cannot have been good for business (‘I can get such large Doses of the same course [sic] Commodity cheaper, that I disposed my Husband not to purchase any of Scotch Manufacture’; Balderston 1951: 647). Byres was clearly stumbling towards the recognition of the antiquity of humankind, long before the celebrated conjecture that certain flint implements excavated at Hoxne in Suffolk could be assigned to ‘a very remote period indeed, even beyond that of the present world’ (Frere 1800; Cook 2003: 183 with 184, fig. 169).

The long acquaintance between Byres and Hamilton was further sustained by their common interest in portable antiquities: suffice it to recall that, around the time they were corresponding about the earthquakes in Calabria, Byres was able to sell Hamilton the famous Roman cameo glass vessel now known as the Portland Vase (Fothergill 1969: 192–6). While it is tempting to speculate on the political dimension of the relationship between Byres and Hamilton, it seems unlikely that their learned discussions were regarded by Hamilton as in any sense ‘cover’ for the investigation of Jacobite activities in Rome. True, Hamilton had been appointed to the court in Naples at a time when the Pope’s recognition of the Stuart claims to the British throne meant that there could be no official British representative in Rome (Sloan 1996: 31): but he surely had other (and probably more discreet) sources of information regarding the activities of the Pretender, and on at least one occasion (in 1772) he had no hesitation in calling on the Jacobite Abbé (Peter) Grant (Ingamells 1997, s.v.) to thank him for his courtesy to English travellers who had passed through Rome on their way to Naples.

**Byres and the Etruscans**

Byres’ interest in the Etruscans goes back to his early years in Rome, when he heard that the Englishman, Thomas Jenkins (Ashby 1913; Pierce 1965; Ford 1974b), whom he was to rival as the leading antiquary there, had been excavating in the environs of Corneto: in other words at Tarquinia. The episode is described in the Minutes of the Society of Antiquaries of London for Thursday, 12 November 1761 (transcribed by Pierce.
1965: 211), which record the arrival of a ‘...Letter from our worthy Member Mr Jenkins …’:

... in the month of May last, at the request and expence of Mr Wilcocks, he made a Tour to Corneto, which is about ten Miles beyond Civita Vecchia. Near Corneto stood once the very ancient City of Tarquinii; now called by the present Inhabitants of Corneto, Civita Turchina. It is situated on an hill, of an oblong form, the top of which is one continued Plain; and where this celebrated City flourished, is now one field of corn. This Hill, once Tarquinii, is joined to Corneto by a ridge of lesser Hills, of about three Miles in circuit; all which Hills are covered with Hillocks called by the Inhabitants Monte Rozzi; in divers of which that have been opened were found various sorts of Etruscan Vases, and some other Sepulchral Ornaments; the walls of some of these Sepulchres were adorned with Paintings, and Inscriptions in Etruscan Characters. His business there was on purpose to examine into the true state of that vast Subterranean Antiquity; and being furnished with a Licence from the Cardinal Camerlingo [sic], which gave him authority to dig where he thought proper, Mr Jenkins caused three of those Cells to be opened. Although no Moveables were found in them, yet the Paintings and Inscriptions were considerable; copies of which he has brought with him to Rome. The Stile of the Paintings he says, were well conceived, and prove Talents and those considerable ones, in the Authors of them – Mr Wilcocks, whose whole attention is given to do good to mankind, and to serve Particulars, his motive, he says, for desiring to promote a work of this kind, was in hopes some Countryman of ours, or other of Rank, who might arrive at Rome the ensuing Season, would be pleased at an occasion of being at some Ex pense, to bring to light one of the greatest Antiquities in Europe, and which hitherto has been so little known, that he apprehends he is the first Englishman, who ever visited it.

Jenkins’ description of the general topography of ancient Tarquinia is as accurate as it needs to be. The ‘hillocks’ that he and the virtuous Mr Wilcocks saw were clearly Etruscan tumuli; they have long since been levelled by ploughing, although a pair of classic aerial photographs taken in 1944 show where they once were (and where their underlying chamber tombs still are: Bradford 1957: 131–9 with fig. 10 and pls 36, 37); the name of the extensive area in question is still Monterozzi. It is, however, more than likely that at least some – though perhaps not all – of the ‘various sorts of Etruscan Vases’ that were being found by others in the Monterozzi chamber tombs were in fact Greek imports. By the 1760s, the distinction between Etruscan and Greek vases was clearer in South Italy and Sicily than it was in Etruria, where ‘the rich harvest of Greek vases from Etruscan cemeteries was not to start until the late 1820s’ (Burn 1997b: 244; and see too Burn 2003). Thus the case, it is interesting in the present context to note that Byres himself, after inspecting what he called the Prince of Biscari’s ‘excellent collection of Etruscan vases’ from Camarina, felt able to conclude as early as 1766 (in the journal of his Sicilian ‘jaunt’) that ‘these nations [Etruscan and Greek] had great communication together and borrowed their arts from one another’ (Ridgway 1989: 223).

News of Jenkins’ discoveries at Tarquinia led to Byres visiting the site himself, and to having drawings made of some of the painted tombs. A charming personal memory of his visit was recorded several decades later by George Dennis:

Signor Carlo Avvolta assured me that Byres was sent by the British government, and was accompanied by several other artists, among whom was the celebrated Piranesi. Avvolta declared that he had a distinct remembrance of the party, because, there being no inn at Corneto, they were entertained by his father, one of the principal inhabitants. The visit of these strangers, their foreign tongue, and the rich presents they made his mother on their departure, made a

deep impression on his boyish memory; and the old gentleman used to produce from the recesses of some quaint cabinet, a number of portraits of the party, which they made of each other, and left as a memorial of their visit.6

Byres intended to publish the drawings that he had had made, along with a full account of what he thought about them and about the Etruscans generally; but in spite of the interest of Sir William Hamilton in Naples, and of Piranesi and Winckelmann in Rome, this never happened. It could be that the project required a greater financial outlay than Byres was willing to make, or able to raise by subscription; and it is in any case virtually certain that he never finished writing the text to go with the illustrations.

Hypogaei

As it is, we all have are a few notes (Ridgway 1989), to which I shall return, and some of the engraved illustrations. The latter were published in a volume usually cited as ‘Byres, Hypogaei’ by Frank Howard (1842), a minor English history and portrait painter (1805–1866; Oakley 2004) and one-time assistant to Sir Thomas Lawrence. How the plates became available to Howard is unknown, and so too are their present whereabouts; nor is it clear whether the 41 plates he published, with minimal captions and no text, were among the 57 mentioned by Fritz Weege (1921: 84) as having reached Livorno. It may or may not be relevant in this connection to note that whereas Howard himself apparently had no other connection with Italy, his father, Henry Howard (1760–1847) – also a history and portrait painter – resided in Rome between 1791 and 1794, and in 1799 was employed by the Society of Dilettanti to make a series of drawings from ancient sculpture (Ingamells 1997 s.v.; Graves and Graham-Vernon 2004). It seems likely that many of the plates that Byres had commissioned were mislaid, in Rome or in transit, after his own departure for Scotland in 1790: the contents of his house in Rome, entrusted to his nephew Patrick Moir, were presumably subject to the new regulations and confusion that ensued after the French entered Rome in 1798. On the other hand, as Elaine P. Loeffler pointed out many years ago, in 1825 Francesco Inghirami was able to publish illustrations of the Tomba dei Ceisini that were ‘strikingly similar’ to those assembled in Howard 1842 (Loeffler 1964: 199 n. 7, with references) suggesting that some of the plates may have resurfaced.

At all events, however Frank Howard gained access to his 1842 selection of the plates that Byres had caused to be prepared, his motive in publishing them is clear enough: to profit from the growing popular interest in the Etruscans provoked in 1836–7, when Carlo and Domenico Campanari of Tuscania opened an exhibition in Pall Mall of Greek and Etruscan objects in 11 reconstructed Etruscan chamber-tombs – including reproductions of their wall-paintings (Colonna 1978; Haynes 2000: 321). This in turn was directly responsible for the appearance of a best-selling but frankly inadequate introduction to Etruria and the Etruscans (Hamilton Gray 1840; see also Williams in this volume) – which was also much in George Dennis’ mind as he prepared his immortal Cities and Cemeteries, first published in 1848.7

Howard’s Victorian picture-book is devoted to five tombs in all. A selection of serviceable reproductions is readily available in Stephan Steingräber’s invaluable catalogue raisonné:  

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It is well enough known that these 18th-century illustrations cannot be accepted as accurate records of what the artist really saw. There is much more of what the artist was used to seeing: which, I take it, was Roman art seen through a late Baroque haze. Even so, it is clear enough that at least four (and almost certainly all five) tombs illustrated in Howard’s book are Hellenistic in date; in their original state, they probably shared the vigour and direct appeal of, say, the large-scale Etruscan death-demons that flank the entrance to the more or less contemporary Tomb of the Anina Family (discovered in 1963: Steingräber 1986: 282, fig. 51; Linington and Serra Ridgway 1997: 95–104; Serra Ridgway 1996: 176–83; 2000).

Interestingly, as the late Graham Ritchie (of the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland) once pointed out to me, the more technical drawings in Howard’s book, namely the sections through the tombs, are of a much higher standard than anything that was being achieved at the time in the archaeological investigation of Scotland’s past (see e.g. Steingräber 1986: 300, figs 134, 135; 324, fig. 224; 345, fig. 311). It is probable that Byres prepared these drawings himself; he had after all been elected as an ‘Architetto’ to the Academy of St Luke at an early stage in his career (which meant that a client who wished to express his gratitude for antiquarian services rendered could do so tactfully by commissioning Byres to design a country- or even a town-house). In another direction, knowledge of which I also owe to Graham Ritchie, the engravings of the Tomba del Cardinale in Howard’s book served as the source of the decorative frieze in the hall of Ardmiddle House (Anon. 1873; long since demolished almost without record) in the environs of Turriff in Byres’ native Aberdeenshire – a remarkable, and I believe unique, transfer of Etruscan wall painting to a country house in Britain.

The name scrawled on the back of the original drawings, now in Würzburg, from which the engravings in Howard’s book were made is ‘Magliowitz’. This is clearly the young Polish artist Franciszek Smuglewicz (Dobrowolski 1978; 1983), who seems to have been one of Byres’ protégés. Why did Byres...
employ a Polish artist to undertake the not inconsiderable task of copying the Etruscan paintings at Tarquinia? The answer is probably a simple one: any Jacobite, whether resident in Rome or not, would have been well aware that the Old Pretender had reinforced Catholic support for his cause in 1719 by marrying (first by proxy in Bologna, and then formally at Montefiascone in southern Etruria) Princess Maria Clementina Sobieska, a god-daughter of the Pope and grand-daughter of King John III of Poland (Corp 2001: 59). That the subsequent Polish connections of the Stuarts were many, varied and long-lasting has recently become apparent (Pininski 2002); the employment of a Polish artist by a loyal Jacobite antiquarian is hardly a surprising addition (see too Dobrowolski 1992).

The ‘History of the Etrurians’
As early as 1767, Byres had already enrolled some subscribers to his projected Etruscan book. In 1779, a rather vague notice appeared in the Gentleman’s Magazine: it looks like a cautious canny attempt to test the market again – at a time when Wedgwood’s ceramic imitations of the antique were in fashion; and when everyone knew that the Wedgwood pottery works in Staffordshire, opened in 1769, were called Etruria. In a different sphere, Robert and James Adam had just published the second volume of their Works in Architecture: it included a presentation of Robert Adam’s new ‘Etruscan Style’ of interior decoration. A good and accessible example of this is known as ‘The Etruscan Dressing Room’ at Osterley, designed and executed between 1775 and 1777, and including Etruscan chairs, Etruscan fire-screen and Etruscan chimney-board (Ridgway 1989: 224–5, with references; Morigi Govi 1992). Contrary to Adam’s claim, the subjects and perspective of the small figured panels in this room bear no resemblance to their counterparts on what were thought at the time to be Etruscan vases (but which were, as we have seen, often Greek), while the purely ornamental features are closer to ancient Roman or even Renaissance conventions than to anything else. They certainly had little or nothing in common with Etruscan tomb-paintings (which, at the time, very few people had seen).

Even so, anyone who was attracted by Adam’s ‘Etruscan Style’ might well have been impressed by the engravings exemplified by Howard’s 1842 collection. Accordingly, one would think that when the Gentleman’s Magazine offered Byres a plate to illustrate the 1779 advertisement for his Etruscan book, he would have selected a really spectacular image. Instead, he gave them possibly the least appealing copper-plate that he had: five Etruscan inscriptions (Ridgway 1989: pl. ii), of which (he tells us) nos I and II are from one tomb, and nos III, IV, and V are from another. Number V is registered, though not from this transcription, in the modern Corpus Inscriptionum Etruriarum, where it is attributed to the Tomba del Cardinale. So, on the evidence of Byres, this must be true of the otherwise unrecorded Nos III and IV as well. As in the case of the technical drawings mentioned above, Byres may well have copied these texts himself; if so, he does not seem to have made any obvious mistakes. And using them as an advertisement speaks volumes for his priorities. Byres was interested in the real Etruscans.

We find precisely the same approach in the surviving manuscript notes for his Etruscan book: drafts written, re-written, scratched out and written again under the heading ‘History of the Etrurians, section 1: the ancient state of Italy’. Here is how it begins:

Nothing can be more uncertain than the accounts left us by the ancients of the first inhabitants [of Italy]. This is principally owing in the first place to the Roman conquests … the vanity of appearing the only great nation probably induced them to destroy the Etruscan records, which perhaps showed the meanness of their own origin, which they probably wanted to conceal. …

Arts, sciences and literature in general seem to have been cultivated in Italy long before Rome began to make any figure, probably ages before the Argonautic expedition or the Trojan War: but that they flourished among the Etruscans in the earliest times of Rome is beyond all doubt. The Romans and Greeks universally allow it, and the monuments of Etruscan art still existing are sufficient to convince us of it. Notwithstanding this, none of their books have reached us; and it is almost certain that none of them were existing in the time of Augustus. We cannot attribute this to their want of records or historians: it is probable that the Romans, as they conquered the different states of Italy, especially the Etruscans, destroyed their books and records as they afterwards did those of the Carthaginians. Fearing that posterity should receive any account of their actions other than the one they chose to give themselves, or envious of the high antiquity of some of these nations in comparison with their own, they endeavoured to bury them in oblivion. Such maxims are not uncommon among illiterate and barbarous nations, such as the Romans were at that time.

We actually have a crucially important point here: every modern book on the Etruscans includes (or ought to include) a reference to the fact that no Etruscan literature has survived: this is presumably why Byres attached so much importance to the inscriptions that he encountered at Tarquinia. Where Byres is wholly in tune with his own times (and certainly with his ‘ain folk’) is in his intense dislike for the ancient Romans. He is clearly thinking along the same lines as Allan Ramsay, whose anonymous Dialogue on Taste (1755; re-issued in 1762) had castigated the Romans as ‘… a gang of mere plunderers’, who ‘… never raised any buildings of which they could be proud’ – an extraordinary accusation that was impressively refuted by Piranesi’s Magnificenza ed Architettura de’ Romani (1761).
The engraved plates for the Etruscan book were presumably lost in the chaos that afflicted Rome at the time of the French Revolution. As for the text, Byres clearly shared the modern view that Etruscan civilization can only be properly appreciated in the light of what had gone before in Italy itself: but his backward-looking curiosity did not know when to stop. He shared William Hamilton’s passion for ‘earth history’ as revealed by ‘petrifications’ and volcanoes. Here, for example, is his comment on a tomb he visited in the vicinity of what we now know to be an important prehistoric site in central Italy, at Ortucchio:

... [these people] certainly had not the use of iron, all these arms being made of flint – as the Americans had them before the Europeans settled in their country. As a consequence, if this was a colony of Greeks [it was not!], they must have settled in Italy before the use of iron was known in Greece: that is, before the birth of Jupiter.

‘Before the birth of Jupiter’ is a good example of our hero’s dilemma. He is stumbling towards Italian prehistory, and is trying to write about it within the constraints of his day – almost a century before another Scot, Daniel Wilson, used the word and the concept of prehistory for the first time in the English language in his Archaeology and Prehistoric Annals of Scotland, published in 1851. For Byres, as for many of his contemporaries, the problem was the teaching laid down by Mother Church that the world was created in 4004 BC. The Universal Deluge was crucial here, and Byres’ attitude to it emerges in his notes: ‘... the greatest part of that space now occupied by the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Aegean seas was formerly land: a clear reference to the equation ‘dry sea = unimaginably long time’ that was the core of James Hutton’s ground-breaking Theory of the Earth, published in Edinburgh in 1785 (it was also used by Robert Burns in connection with the staying-powers of love and red, red roses ‘till a’ the seas gang dree’). Byres knew and corresponded with Hutton (Repcheck 2003); but there is nothing in his surviving notes to suggest that his account of ‘the ancient state of Italy’ was ever intended to put a boat, ‘so as occasionally to afford a pleasing accident’ that has caught Byres’ attention much of relevance in the volumes devoted by the British Museum to Sir William Hamilton and his collection, and more recently to the new Enlightenment gallery: Jenkins and Sloan 1996, with Burn 1997a; Sloan and Burnett 2003; more generally, see too Bignamini 2004.

Ironically, Hamilton – the great collector – was also consulted at one point by the Pope, who wanted his opinions on the Vaticano Museum, recently established ‘to curb the prodigious export of valuable monuments of antiquity which has prevailed of late years’ (Fothinghill 1969: 124–6).

4 ‘Mr Wilcockes’ is clearly the distinguished private scholar Joseph Wilcockes FSA (1724–1791; Ingamells 1997 s.v.; Carlyle and Sharp 2004), who published ‘An account of some subterraneous apartments, with Etruscan inscriptions, discovered at Civita Turchino in Italy’ in the Royal Society’s Philosophical Transactions for 1763; it was translated into Italian by Francesco Inghirami in 1825 (Möbius 1967: 57).

5 See now Mascl 2007, 2008: 17–24, and Moore 2008: 149–53, all with further references, on the rôles of Winckelmann (in a letter of 1758 and at greater length in 1764) and the self-styled Baron D’Hancarville (in his publication of Sir William Hamilton’s collection) in establishing that the vases long identified as Etruscan by patriotic Tuscan scholars were in fact produced in Greece or Magna Graecia, as the more perceptive but less influential Neapolitan tradition had long maintained.

6 Dennis 1883: I, 340. Avvolta, Dennis’ guide when he first visited Corneto, was the gonfaloniere (literally ‘standard bearer’, i.e. in effect the chief magistrate) of the town: ‘a lively, intelligent, old gentleman, experienced in excavations’ (Dennis 1883: I, 340). Given his allegiance to the Jacobite cause, it seems unlikely that Byres was (or allowed himself to be represented as) an emissary of ‘the British government’: it is possible that Avolta confused his visit with that of Jenkins, who was regarded as an unofficial English agent (cf. Ford 1974b) in Rome, or, more probably, that over the years he had consciously or otherwise inflated the importance of his visitors.

7 Dennis 1848: Preface (‘Her work... is far from satisfactory.... It is to supply such deficiencies that I offer these volumes to the public’). Less delicately, Dennis wrote to his publisher, John Murray, in 1846 that ‘... Mrs Gray has brought forth, I hear, a fourth edition, and I would fain put a full stop to her erroneous progeny...’ (quoted by Rhodes 1973: 49).

8 CIE II.1.3 (Torquini) 5376 (Morandi 1983: 25, figs 21, 22; 36, fig. 43; 65), 5525 and 5526, corresponding to Nos I and II in the Gentleman’s Magazine advertisement, come from the Tomb of the Ceseinie.

In the following paragraphs, the unattributed quotations from Byres’ unpublished notes and other documents are taken from the fuller transcriptions (with silently adjusted spelling and punctuation) in Ridgway 1989 of manuscript material housed in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

His interest in the Etruscans was far from exclusively artistic, or commercial. Above all, like the great scholar whose life and work we honour in this volume, he was concerned with the Etruscans as they had really been, and had no time for fashionable concerns with the Etruscans as-wished-for.

Notes

1 It is now some time since the late Massimo Pallottino suggested that I might like to find out more about James Byres’ Etruscan interests. As a result, I was able to read a short paper on certain unpublished documents in the National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, at the Secondo Congresso Internazionale Etrusco in Florence in 1985 (Ridgway 1989). The best overall account of Byres’ life and (Roman) times remains Ford 1974; see too Ingamells 1997 s.v.; Ridgway 1987; 2004; and Haynes 2000: 320. Specific aspects have been usefully treated by Colvin 1997 (architectural activities); Gordon Slade 1987 (the Aberdeen years); and Coen 2002 (art-dealing). Though of less interest for our present purposes, it is good to see that Byres’ ideas on painting – and much else besides – continue to be cited in modern studies of Scottish art (see, e.g., Macmillan 1886: 66, 140, 142).

2 The literature on the Grand Tour is vast and growing. An exhibition mounted in London and Rome in 1996–1997 afforded an admirable panorama of the lure of Italy, and of its effect on 18th-century British taste: Wilton and Bignamini 1996. There is in addition much of relevance in the volumes devoted by the British Museum to Sir William Hamilton and his collection, and more recently to the new Enlightenment gallery: Jenkins and Sloan 1996, with Burn 1997a; Sloan and Burnett 2003; more generally, see too Bignamini 2004.

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