



# THE ROMAN GOVERNMENT OF BRITAIN

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# The Roman Government of Britain

Anthony R. Birley

**OXFORD**  
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Great Clarendon Street, Oxford ox2 6DP

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Published in the United States  
by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

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First published 2005

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Data available

Typeset by Regent Typesetting, London

Printed in Great Britain

on acid-free paper by

Biddles Ltd, King's Lynn

ISBN 0-19-925237-8 978-0-19-925237-4

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

*E. B. in memoriam*

## PREFACE

A work on similar lines to the present one was published in 1981, *The Fasti Roman Britain (FRB)*. This attempted to list all known Roman high officials who served in Britain, and to analyse their origins and careers. It has long been out of print, and meanwhile some new officials have turned up: one or two governors, several legionary legates and tribunes, a procurator and two junior procurators, a prefect of the fleet. Initially it was intended just to publish a discussion of these as *addenda* to *FRB*. A start was made in 2001 with the assistance of Andreas Kriekhaus for some months: to the Gerda-Henkel-Stiftung, which funded his work, and to Dr Kriekhaus grateful acknowledgement is made. In due course it became clear that many entries on previously recorded officials also needed revision, since more is now known about their dates, careers, or origin. Hence a completely new version has been produced.

Various changes in presentation have been made. Abbreviations in inscriptions have been expanded,<sup>1</sup> and translations added, as they have been for all literary sources quoted. Except for the inscriptions, Greek sources are given only in translation (the translations are my own). The original Part I, 'The senatorial career under the principate', has been condensed; a summary version, with some items from Part III in *FRB* (on 'Origins and careers'), here omitted, is offered in I. 1. Details are added on the governors' staff and on 'local government' (I. 1. 2, I. 1. 4). The new I. 13, 'The procuratorial career', also has a discussion of the procurators' subordinates (I. 13. 1); and IV. 3, 'Military command and civil administration in late Roman Britain', includes the evidence from the *Notitia Dignitatum* on the *officia* of the generals and governors.

To reduce the number of notes, references to literary sources are mostly put in brackets in the text, and the officials of the undivided province are all numbered, with cross-references to Gov(ernor) 1, LL (legionary legate) 1, and so on. Carausius and Allectus are given a separate part (III), with full citation of the numismatic evidence and the literary sources. The governors of Upper and Lower Britain and the legionary legates of Upper Britain (only three), here not numbered, are treated together, as far as possible in chronological order, from c.213 to 285 (II. 2). All officials, civil and military, from the final period, again not numbered, are also taken together, in chronological order (IV. 4). An appendix treats the 'client-rulers'.

A further change is that at the appropriate chronological point the evidence

<sup>1</sup> C. is expanded as C. (Gaius), Cn. as Cn. (Gnaeus): pedantry perhaps, but Quintilian 1. 7. 28 and other sources make clear that the forms often found in modern works, 'Caius' and 'Cnaeus' (or even 'Cnaius') did not exist. See e. g. R. Cagnat, *Cours d'épigraphie latine*<sup>4</sup> (1914) 39f.

has been cited and discussed for imperial visits to Britain (by Claudius, Hadrian, Severus, Constantius, Constantine I, and Constans), for other relevant episodes (such as the Gallic Empire and Stilicho's measures), and on 'The End of Roman Rule' (IV. 5). This, combined with the data on officials, is intended to produce a kind of handbook or narrative history of Britain under Roman rule, more fully documented than anything now available<sup>2</sup> (although much has had to be omitted, e.g. *praefecti castrorum*, equestrian officers, and auxiliary regiments). Hence the new title: *The Roman Government of Britain*. The select bibliography is confined to works frequently cited, with some other items of particular relevance. A Glossary lists mainly Latin technical terms.

Most of the evidence concerns military activity, particularly in the northern frontier region. Much of importance in Roman Britain—such as urban and agricultural development, the economy, and religion—are not handled here except in passing. The more civilized southern parts have less narrative history, but here in particular the continually increasing mass of archaeological publications is overwhelming: a new synthesis would be a daunting challenge. The north always remained what Tacitus called Britain, 'a savage province' (*feroci provincia*, *Agr.* 8. 1), 'never peaceful enough' (*numquam satis quieta*, *Hist.* 2. 97. 1). The furthest north was never permanently conquered, and for its size Britain always had an exceptionally large army—which from the late second century onwards repeatedly created other problems: by the early fifth century Britain was labelled 'a province fertile in usurpers' (*fertilis provincia tyrannorum*, Jerome, *Ep.* 133. 9). It was the military history of Britain which attracted most attention from Roman writers, and there is a surprising amount of it, first and foremost in Tacitus, a unique source for the first forty years, but also in Cassius Dio, Ammianus Marcellinus, the *Historia Augusta*, and many others.

Aside from this, the men who served in Britain are in many cases well-known figures, mentioned in other writers, of poetry as well as prose, and in inscriptions outside Britain. More attention is devoted here to their origins, background, and careers than some may think necessary. Others will, it is hoped, agree that this makes the long period, over 350 years, when Britain was part of a large empire, more interesting. Fuller attention to the men who served here can contribute to a better understanding of how Rome ruled its empire.

Any undertaking of this kind has to build on the labours of many others, beginning with some giants of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (such as Kubitschek, Dessau, Ritterling, Groag, and A. Stein), and of more

<sup>2</sup> But it must be stressed that it is in no sense a substitute for the incomparable History of Roman Britain by Sheppard Frere (frequently cited below in the 3rd edn. of 1987 as Frere, *Britannia*<sup>3</sup>. To my regret I was not aware of the edn. of 1999, published by the Folio Society, with further revisions, until the present work was complete).

recent scholars now no longer here to read these words (especially Ronald Syme and Margaret Roxan). It is hoped that the annotation makes this clear. It has been especially welcome to be given off-prints or monographs by colleagues, too many to name individually. Most of the writing has been done in Vindolanda Museum: I am grateful to all the staff of the Vindolanda Trust for their support and for the congenial atmosphere here. Special thanks for their advice are due to Géza Alföldy, Werner Eck, Paul Holder, Olli Salomies, Peter Weiss, Stan Wolfson, and Tony Woodman. For any faults, of structure, method, or fact, I must take sole responsibility. My principal debt, to Eric Birley (1906–1995), will never be forgotten: *FRB* was dedicated to him; this version is dedicated to his memory.

*Vindolanda*  
10 June 2004

A. R. B.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Journals are abbreviated as in *L'Année philologique*, with a few minor exceptions. References to individual sections are as follows: to those in part I, Gov. = governors of the undivided province; LL = legionary legates; *iurid.* = *iuridici*; Trib. = *tribuni laticlavii*; Proc. = procurators; *Praef. cl.* = prefects of the fleet; *com. Aug.* = *comites* of the emperors. References to other parts are given as II. 1–2, III. 1–3, IV. 1–5.

<i>AA</i>	<i>Archaeologia Aeliana</i> (Newcastle upon Tyne)
<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i> (1888– )
<i>ANRW</i>	H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), <i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der Römischen Welt</i> (1972– )
<i>BHAC</i>	<i>Bonner Historia-Augusta-Colloquium</i> (1963–91)
Birley, <i>RBRA</i>	E. Birley, <i>Roman Britain and the Roman Army</i> (1953; repr. 1961)
<i>BMC</i>	H. Mattingly, <i>British Museum Catalogue of Coins in the Roman Empire</i> , iii. <i>Nerva to Hadrian</i> (1936); iv. <i>Antoninus Pius to Commodus</i> (1940); v. <i>Pertinax to Elagabalus</i> (1950)
<i>BMC Ionia</i>	B. V. Head, <i>Catalogue of the Greek Coins of Ionia</i> (1892)
<i>BMC Pont.</i>	R. S. Poole, <i>Catalogue of Greek Coins. Pontus, Paphlagonia, Bithynia, and the Kingdom of Bosphorus</i> (1889)
<i>CAH XI</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> , xi (1936)
Camodeca, <i>TPS</i>	G. Camodeca, <i>Tabulae Pompeianae Sulpiciorum</i> (Rome, 1999)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (1863ff.)
<i>CSIR I. 6</i>	J. C. Coulston and E. J. Phillips, <i>Corpus Signorum Imperii Romani. Great Britain</i> , i/6. <i>Hadrian's Wall West of the North Tyne, and Carlisle</i> (1988)
<i>CW</i>	<i>Transactions of the Cumberland and Westmorland Antiquarian and Archaeological Society</i>
Degrassi, <i>FC</i>	A. Degrassi, <i>I Fasti consolari dell'impero romano dal 30 avanti Cristo al 613 dopo Cristo</i> (1952)
Domaszewski, <i>RO</i> <sup>2</sup>	A. v. Domaszewski, <i>Die Rangordnung des römischen Heeres</i> (1967), 2nd edn. by B. Dobson.
<i>EE</i>	<i>Ephemeris Epigraphica</i> (1872–1913)
<i>ES</i>	<i>Epigraphische Studien</i>
<i>EOS</i>	S. Panciera (ed.), <i>Epigrafia e ordine senatorio</i> , i–ii (1982 [1984])
<i>FGrH</i>	F. Jacoby, <i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> (1923–60)
<i>FHG</i>	C. Müller, <i>Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum</i> (1841–70)
<i>FO</i> <sup>2</sup>	L. Vidman, <i>Fasti Ostienses</i> (2nd edn., 1982)
<i>FRB</i>	A. R. Birley, <i>The Fasti of Roman Britain</i> (1981)
<i>HA</i>	<i>Historia Augusta</i> (elsewhere often still cited as <i>S(criptores) H(istoriae) A(ugustae)</i> )
<i>HAC</i> , NS	<i>Historiae Augustae Colloquia, nova series</i> (1991– )

- LAM* II M. Euzennat *et al.*, *Inscriptions antiques de Maroc*, ii. *Inscriptions latines* (1982)
- IDR* I. I. Russu *et al.*, *Inscriptiones Daciae Romanae* (1975– )
- IEph.* R. Merkelbach *et al.*, *Die Inschriften von Ephesos* (1979– )
- IGR* R. Cagnat, *Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas pertinentes* i, iii, iv (1901–21)
- ILAfr.* R. Cagnat *et al.*, *Inscriptions latines d'Afrique* (1923)
- ILAlg.* S. Gsell, *Inscriptions latines de l'Algérie*, i (1958); H.-G. Pflaum, ii/1 (1958); ii/2 (1976)
- ILLug.* A. and J. Šašel, *Inscriptiones Latinae quae in Iugoslavia inter annos MCMXL et MCMLX repertae et editae sunt* (1963); . . . *inter annos MCMLX et MCMLXX* (1978); . . . *inter annos MCMIII et MCMXL* (1986)
- ILS* H. Dessau, *Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae* (1892–1916)
- ILTun.* A. Merlin, *Inscriptions latines de Tunisie* (1944)
- Inscr. It.* *Inscriptiones Italiae* (1936– )
- IMylasa* W. Blümel, *Die Inschriften von Mylasa* (1987)
- IRT* J. M. Reynolds and J. B. Ward-Perkins, *The Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania* (1952)
- ISmyrna* G. Petzl, *Die Inschriften von Smyrna* (1982–90)
- Lörincz, *OPEL* B. Lörincz, *Onomasticon*, i–iv (1994–2002)
- MGH, AA* T. Mommsen *et al.* (eds.), *Monumenta Germaniae Historica. Auctores Antiquissimi*
- MRR* T. R. S. Broughton, *The Magistrates of the Roman Republic*, i (1951); ii (1952); *Supplement* (1960)
- Ogilvie-Richmond R. M. Ogilvie and I. A. Richmond, *Cornelii Taciti De vita Agricolae* (1967)
- Pflaum, *CP* H. G. Pflaum, *Les Carrières procuratoriennes équestres sous le Haut-Empire romain* (1960–1); *Supplément* (1982)
- PIR*<sup>1,2</sup> E. Klebs, P. v. Rohden, and H. Dessau, *Prosopographia imperii Romani* (1897); 2nd edn. by E. Groag, A. Stein, L. Petersen, *et al.* (1933– )
- PLRE* A. H. M. Jones, J. R. Martindale, and J. Morris, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, i. *AD 260–395* (1971); J. R. Martindale, ii. *AD 395–527* (1980)
- Raepsaet-Charlier, *FOS* M.-T. Raepsaet-Charlier, *Prosopographie des femmes de l'ordre sénatorial (Ier–IIe siècles)* (1987)
- RE* G. Wissowa *et al.* (eds.), *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft* (1893–1978)
- RIB* R. G. Collingwood and R. P. Wright, *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain* i. *Inscriptions on Stone* (1965; repr. with addenda by R. S. O. Tomlin 1995); S. S. Frere *et al.*, ii/1–8. *Instrumentum Domesticum* (1990–5)
- RIC* H. Mattingly and E. A. Sydenham, *The Roman Imperial Coinage*, i.

- Augustus to Vitellius* (1923; 2nd edn. by C. H. V. Sutherland, 1984);  
 ii. *Vespasian to Hadrian* (1926); iii. *Antoninus Pius to Commodus* (1930);  
 iv/1. *Pertinax to Geta* (1936); iv/2. *Macrinus to Pupienus* (1938); eid.  
 and C. H. V. Sutherland, iv/3. *Gordian III to Uranius Antoninus*  
 (1949); P. H. Webb, v/1 (1927); id., v/2 (1933); C. H. V.  
 Sutherland, VI. *From Diocletian's Reform (AD 294) to the Death of*  
*Maximinus (AD 313)* (1967); P. M. Bruun, vii. *Constantine and*  
*Licinius, AD 313–337* (1968); J. P. C. Kent, viii. *The Family of*  
*Constantine I, AD 337–364* (1981); J. W. E. Pearce, ix. *Valentinian*  
*I–Theodosius I* (1951); J. P. C. Kent, x. *The Divided Empire and the*  
*Fall of the Western Parts* (1994)
- RIT* G. Alföldy, *Die Römischen Inschriften von Tarraco* (1975)
- RMD* M. M. Roxan, *Roman Military Diplomas*, i (1978); ii (1985); iii  
 (1994); ead. and P. A. Holder, iv (2003)
- Scheid, *CFA* J. Scheid *et al.* (eds.), *Commentarii fratrum Arvalium qui supersunt*  
 (1998)
- Schulze, *LE* W. Schulze, *Zur Geschichte lateinischer Eigennamen* (2nd edn. 1933)
- SEG* *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* (1923– )
- SIG<sup>3</sup>* W. Dittenberger, *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (3rd edn., 1915–  
 24)
- Syme, *RP* R. Syme, *Roman Papers*
- TAM* E. Kalinka *et al.*, *Tituli Asiae Minoris* (1901– )
- Thomasson, *LP* B. E. Thomasson, *Laterculi praesidum*, i (1984), iii (1990)
- TV* ii, iii A. K. Bowman and J. D. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing-*  
*Tablets: Tabulae Vindolandenses*, ii (1994); iii (2003)

## NOTE ON THE CITATION OF SOURCES

Literary sources are given as far as possible according to the chronological order of their composition. Editions are in most cases only mentioned where there are textual variations. Letters or words supplied by editors are given as *proel*<*iorum*>, those which cannot be restored as †*ut leni*†.

In inscriptions abbreviations are expanded within round brackets: *pr(o) pr(aetore)*; letters or words which are restored within square brackets: *quin[que]nnio*; words omitted within pointed brackets: <*imperator*>; words (mostly names) which have been deleted within double square brackets: [[*P(ublio) Septimio Getae*]]; letters which are uncertain are dotted: *G[allus]*. Gaps are indicated as . . . , where the length is uncertain.

# I

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High Officials of the Undivided Province, 43-*c.*213

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## I. I

### INTRODUCTION: THE SENATORIAL CAREER IN THE PRINCIPATE

The *cursus honorum*, career-structure, for senators and equestrians was reformed by Augustus, on lines which remained in force for over 200 years.<sup>1</sup> From the conquest in 43 until the late third century the governors of Britain were senators with the rank of ex-consul, the legionary legates and *iuridici* were senators of more junior rank, and the *tribuni laticlavii* were future senators. Side by side with these officials there were two of equestrian rank, the procurator, responsible for finance, and the prefect of the fleet. A brief survey of their career-structure is thus appropriate. (The procuratorial career is discussed in I. 13. 1.)

For senators, Augustus modified the Republican *leges annales* governing the age at which the traditional magistracies could be held: quaestorship at 24; followed after an interval of one year by tribunate of the plebs or aedileship; praetorship at 29; consulship at 41. He and his successors also created many new posts, both at Rome, in Italy, and, notably, in the provinces. However, they retained for ten provinces the Republican system of government by annually changing proconsuls, each with a quaestor and one or more *legati*. Senators had the title *vir clarissimus*, 'most famous man'. An early documentary example of this usage is known from Britain, in a letter mentioning the governor Neratius Marcellus (Gov. 15).

Entry to the senatorial order was conferred by the emperor on young men with a suitable property-qualification and free birth by the grant of the *latus clavus*, 'broad stripe'. Augustus instituted pre-senatorial service: qualified young men at the age of about 18 were required to spend a year as one of 'the twenty men' at Rome, in one of the four boards collectively called the *vigintiviri* (Dio 54. 26. 5 ff., cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3. 29. 1). The most prestigious was that of the *tresviri monetales*, or *tresviri a(uro) a(rgento) a(ere) f(lando) f(eriundo)*, the three 'mintmasters': all patricians seem to have begun as mintmasters. The least favoured were the *tresviri capitales*, responsible for capital punishment among other duties; the other two boards were of the 'four men for looking after the streets', *quattuorviri viarum curandarum*, and of the 'ten men for judging law-suits',

<sup>1</sup> In this section references are limited: a detailed discussion of the senatorial career was provided in *FRB* 3 ff.; see further R. J. A. Talbert, *The Senate of Imperial Rome* (1984), *passim*; A. Chastagnol, *Le Sénat romain à l'époque impériale* (1992), esp. 23–199; W. Eck, *Die Verwaltung des Römischen Reiches in der hohen Kaiserzeit. Ausgewählte und erweiterte Beiträge* (2 vols. 1995, 1997). For technical terms in this section see also the glossary.

*decemviri stlitibus iudicandis*. Although it is clear that the *monetales* were the most prestigious and the *capitales* the least prestigious, it is debatable what bearing tenure of a particular post had on the later career.<sup>2</sup>

Service for a year, perhaps as many as three years, as a military tribune in a legion (known as *tribunus laticlavius* from the *latus clavus*) was also at least encouraged. A few served in two successive legions.<sup>3</sup> A fair number of career-inscriptions mention a tribunate but not a post in the vigintivirate, from which exemption may have been granted.<sup>4</sup>

This preliminary career was followed by entry to the 600-strong senate as quaestor at 24: there were twenty quaestors each year. Two (or perhaps more) were attached to the emperor: their tasks included reading his letters to the senate (*Dig.* 1. 13. 1. 2 and 4); ten were attached to proconsuls of provinces; the remainder served at Rome. The quaestorship was followed after a year's interval by either the tribunate of the plebs (ten posts) or the aedileship (six posts); then, again after an interval, by the praetorship (at first twelve posts, rising to seventeen or eighteen by Trajan's time), held at 29. These posts were all annual. Those recommended by the emperor, *candidati Caesaris*, were especially favoured.

The final Republican office, to which all senators aspired, was the consulship, for which the minimum age remained, as under the Republic, the forty-second year. In the imperial period the two consuls who took office on 1 January and gave their names to the year, the *consules ordinarii*, stepped down after a few months, and were replaced by 'suffect (substitute) consuls', *consules suffecti*. As time went on the number of suffects each year increased: there were often six or more each year, rising to seven or eight by the end of the first century and a dozen or more in the second.<sup>5</sup> Patricians were exempted from the tribunate of the plebs or aedileship, which partly explains why there were four less posts available than for the quaestors and two less than for praetors. Patricians were apparently allowed to become consul in their early thirties. Another way in which men could hold office earlier than the norm was

<sup>2</sup> E. Birley, *PBA* 39 (1953), 201f., repr. in id., *The Roman Army* (1988), 79f., argued that assignment to a particular board in the vigintivirate could be taken as an indication of the future career; approved by Syme, *RP* iv 280. For scepticism: B. Dobson, in D. J. Breeze and B. Dobson, *Roman Officers and Frontiers* (1993), 130f.

<sup>3</sup> A list of over thirty cases of double tribunates is given in *FRB* 10. Two men actually served in three legions, the future emperor Hadrian (*HA Hadr.* 2. 2–5, *ILS* 308) and L. Minicius Natalis (*LL* 22). The length of service is often assumed to have been for a year at most, but 'normally something like three years' in the view of E. Birley, *PBA* 39 (1953), 199f., repr. in id., *Roman Army*, 77f.; see also A. R. Birley, in G. Alföldy et al. (eds.), *Gedenkschrift Eric Birley* (2000), 102ff.

<sup>4</sup> See the list in A. R. Birley, in *Gedenkschrift Eric Birley*, 106ff.

<sup>5</sup> See R. Syme, *Tacitus* (1958), 653ff.; J. Morris, *Listy fil.* 87 (1964), 325ff.; id. *Listy fil.* 88 (1965), 22ff.; G. Alföldy, *Konsulat und Senatorenstand unter den Antoninen* (1977), 33ff., 327ff.

through the Augustan legislation to encourage the birth-rate: the *ius liberorum* allowed a year's remission from the prescribed minimum age for each child.

In addition to the Republican magistracies, there were two purely ceremonial posts for some young senators: each year one could be *praefectus feriarum Latinarum*, 'prefect (at the time) of the Latin festival', and six could be a *sevir equitum Romanorum*, one of the 'six men to lead the squadrons of Roman knights' at their annual ride-past. A junior senator was also in charge of recording the proceedings of the senate, as *ab actis senatus*. Finally, senators could serve as legate to a proconsul for a year at any stage in their career, and some did so before the praetorship.<sup>6</sup>

Another group of men entered the senate at a later stage, by *adlectio*, special enrolment, often after service as an equestrian procurator. Some entered the senate as quaestor, without preliminary service; others were given the rank of ex-tribune of the plebs or aedile, or, in most cases praetorian rank, as *adlectus inter praetorios*. Some who had already been in the senate were adlected to higher rank, allowing them to omit one or more magistracies.

Numerous posts could be held by ex-praetors:<sup>7</sup>

- *at Rome*: two as *praefectus frumenti dandi*, probably held for only a year; perhaps for two or three years, three as *praefectus aerarii militaris* and two as *praefectus aerarii Saturni*
- *in Italy*: nine *curatores viarum*; from the time of Trajan an uncertain number of *praefecti alimentorum* (a post also held by ex-consuls); from Marcus Aurelius onwards there were four or five *iuridici* of Italian districts
- *in the provinces*:
  - (a) *imperial*: twenty-four as legionary legate, *legatus (Augusti) legionis*; at first five, ultimately fourteen as provincial governor, *legatus Augusti pro praetore*; two as *iuridicus*, in Hispania Tarraconensis and (from the Flavian period) in Britain; a third (not actually called *iuridicus*) served in Galatia-Cappadocia c.70–114. All these posts seem mostly to have lasted for two to three years.
  - (b) *proconsular*: for one year, fourteen as *legatus pro praetore* (some of these served before the praetorship); eight as proconsul
- *in Italy or the provinces*: from the late first century, as curator of a town, *curator civitatis* or *reipublicae*. The numbers and no doubt the term of office were variable.

Some special posts were created on an *ad hoc* basis, especially in wartime. Patricians seldom held any praetorian post, since they could become consul within three years of their praetorship.

<sup>6</sup> On the quaestorship and career between quaestorship and praetorship see *FRB* 14f.

<sup>7</sup> See *FRB* 15ff.