

LEGIONARY LEGATES IN BRITAIN  
(WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE DIVISION OF THE PROVINCE)  
THE *CURSUS HONORUM* OF SENATORS AT THE TURN OF THE THIRD  
CENTURY AD IN THE LIGHT OF MODERN RESEARCH

by

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**ABSTRACT:** At the turn of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, there were three legions in Britain, commanded by senators. Their service in this position lasted for 2–3 years. Ten senators of the Severan period whose *cursus* featured the command of a legion in Britain have been identified. Five of them were *homines novi*, while five belonged to *gentes senatoriae*. They originated from Italy, Africa and the East (there were no representatives from the West). There is no clear single model for the career of a legionary legate in Britain, but we can say that it was an important function in the *cursus honorum*, giving people who held it good prospects for promotions (9 out of the 10 legates later became consuls). There were two provinces of Britain under the Severans: inferior (praetorian) with Legio VI victrix and superior (consular) with Legio II Augusta and XX Valeria victrix; the legate of Britannia inferior was not the legate of Legio VI victrix at the same time.

Professor Anthony Richard BIRLEY (1937–2020) devoted many years of his scholarly life to issues regarding the military and administrative history of Roman Britain<sup>1</sup>. Many of his works contain sections and even entire chapters devoted to prosopographical matters, including those relating to the commanders of legions in Britain<sup>2</sup>. During the period of the last Antonines and the Severan dynasty, this was the case with the following legions: II Augusta, VI victrix and XX Valeria victrix. His findings regarding the division of Britain into superior and inferior were also fundamental<sup>3</sup>. In this paper, I would like to present the results of my research, while emphasising the contribution of the Late Professor A.R. BIRLEY in the development of Roman prosopography.

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<sup>1</sup> A list of his major works can be found e.g. at: <https://www.dur.ac.uk/research/directory/staff/?id=7643>; <https://followinghadrian.com/2020/12/22/in-memoriam-anthony-birley-1937-2020/>; <https://independent.academia.edu/anthonybirley>.

<sup>2</sup> See, for instance: A.R. BIRLEY 1964; 1971; 1980; 1981; 1982; 2002; 2005 and his numerous publications on Hadrian's Wall and Vindolanda.

<sup>3</sup> A.R. BIRLEY 2005: 333–336.