

In spring AD 119, Aulus Platorius Nepos, a close friend of Hadrian, was appointed as *consul suffectus* (suffect consul), the supreme magistracy in Rome, before being sent out as governor of Germania Inferior.

Nepos is known from a dedicatory inscription at Aquileia ([CIL V 877](#), Smallwood 229), where he had been appointed *patronus* (patron). The local decurions marked the event by setting up a statue of him. The marble base of his statue was found in Aquileia at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It contains a long inscription detailing his career and complete name; Aulus Platorius Nepos Aponius Italicus Manilianus Gaius Licinius Pollio. From this, it would appear that his original name had been Gaius Licinius Pollio and that he was adopted by a certain A. Platorius Aponius Italicus Manilianus (whose name also looks like the result of adoption), which gave him that long name.



*Statue base reporting the career of Aulus Platorius Nepos. From Aquileia, c. AD 125. Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Aquileia
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A. Platorius Nepos had a prominent career during the reign of Trajan (AD 98-117). According to this inscription, Nepos was consul, augur (priest), governor of the provinces of Britannia, Germania Inferior and Thrace, as well as commander of the I Adiutrix legion, quaestor from the province of Macedonia,

supervisor of Roman roads (Viae Cassia, Clodia, Ciminia and Nova Traiana), military tribune of the XXII Primigenia, praetor, popular tribune and *triumvir capitalis* and patron of Aquileia. His functions are not listed in chronological order but more in order of importance. Thanks to this inscription and other sources (most notably two diplomas), it is possible to reconstruct approximately Platorius' life and career.

It is unclear where Nepos was born and raised. Was he from Aquileia, where he was honoured with a statue, or from southern Spain, where he befriended Hadrian? Birley believes that it is "not improbable" that Nepos came from Spain; he also notes that the gentile name Platorius is otherwise attested in the province of *Baetica*, Hadrian's *patria*. Nepos probably began his career in about AD 95 in Rome as *triumvir capitalis*, with the responsibility of overseeing the carrying out of executions of those condemned in the courts, the least favoured post in the vigintivirate. This was followed by a post in the late 90s as military tribune in the XXII Primigenia legion in *Mogontiacum* (Mainz) under the command of the governor of Germania Superior (like Hadrian in 97-98).



*Brick stamp of the XXII Primigenia (AE 1978, 0518). Leg(io) XXII P(rimigenia) p(ia)
Photo: Peter Schmelzle (cc-by-sa-3.0)*

Next, he was elected quaestor and was sent to Macedonia to handle the finances of the province under the proconsul. He later became Tribune of the People in Rome, then praetor (responsible for the administration of justice) in AD 111. Shortly after that, he held a curatorship of a member of roads in Etruria around 112-113 before becoming legate of Legio I Adiutrix in Pannonia during Trajan's Parthian campaigns (115-117). When in August 117 Hadrian ascended the imperial throne, Nepos was

governor of Thrace. It is possible that he hosted Hadrian when the new emperor was on his way from Antioch to Rome in early 118 (read more [here](#) & [here](#)).

Nepos' consulship began in the Year of the Consulship of Hadrianus and Rusticus, replacing Rusticus and serving alongside the Emperor. In spring 119, Hadrian was into his third consulship and would never hold the office again. Indeed, he served for only four months until the end of April, and during this time, as the *Historia Augusta* reports, he changed guard prefects (Septicius Clarus, Turbo) and frequently administered justice.

Having himself been consul three times, he reappointed many to the consulship for the third time and men without number to a second term; his own third consulship he held for only four months, and during his term he often administered justice. *HA Hadr.* 8.4

Although the number of men Hadrian appointed to the consulship for the third time is grossly exaggerated, the emperor seems to have had strong relationships with consuls. Dio reports that he showed them honour at the horse races and would sometimes join them when they were sitting as judges (Dio. 69.7).

The consulship of Nepos may be attributed to his friendship with Hadrian. According to the *HA*, Nepos enjoyed the friendship and devotion of Hadrian for many years. Perhaps they got to know each other as teenagers in Italica when Hadrian spent some time there, or maybe they met in the context of Trajan's Parthian War. The *HA* also reports that Hadrian esteemed him so very high that when he came to his friend during an illness, Platorius Nepos refused to receive him. However, this refusal had no effect, and no punishment was inflicted on him.

At this same time he enjoyed, besides, the friendship of

Sosius Papius and Platorius Nepos, both of the senatorial order. *HA Hadr.* 4.2

he held in the greatest abhorrence Platorius Nepos, whom he had formerly so loved that, once, when he went to see him while ill and was refused admission, he nevertheless let him go unpunished. *HA Hadr.* 23.4

Birley suggests that Nepos may have remained in Thrace during his consulship and moved directly from there to his next province, Germania Inferior. After he was appointed suffect consul, Nepos was to be appointed as provincial governor, based at *Colonia Agrippinensis* (modern-day Cologne). While there, he may have had to receive Hadrian on his tour of the inspection of the Germanic *limes* in AD 121-2.



The Praetorium of Colonia Agrippinensium, the Roman Governor's Palace of Germania Superior, where Nepos lived during his governorship.

Platorius Nepos was to replace Quintus Pompeius Falco as legate of Britannia, leaving Germania Inferior with the emperor around July 122. Nepos is reported as the builder of Hadrian's Wall by the *HA*, and the several inscriptions found in Britain that name him (see [here](#)) attest to this. His presence

in Britannia in 122 is also securely dated by a military diploma dated 17 July 122 (*CIL XVI 69*). The diploma was for a veteran of the army in Britain discharged by Pompeius Falco, who had received a certificate of privileges on that date (*XVI Kalendas Augustas*).



Two bronze plates formed the front and back of a four-leaved document granting citizenship to an army auxiliary named Gemellus after twenty-five years of service. It is dated July 17 AD 122.

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Nepos was to seek no further office after his time in Britain. Bricks bearing his name and dated AD 123 and AD 134 show that he owned a brick workshop near Rome that supplied the materials needed for the construction activities of Hadrian and his successor. The *HA* twice reports that Nepos fell out of favour with Hadrian and was then regarded as his enemy. It is not known how long Nepos lived.

And yet he was always ready to listen to whispers about his friends, and in the end he treated almost all of them as enemies, even the closest and even those whom he had

raised to the highest of honours, such as Attianus and
Nepos and Septicius Clarus. *HA Hadr.* 15.2

Sources & references:

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Header image: RIB 1634 Drawing of a fragmentary dedication-slab to Platorius Nepos found near Housesteads milecastle (no. 37). [Roman Inscriptions of Britain](#)



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