

# Provincial Priory of Somerset



## A'Beuceant

*(Longer explanation, a copy of which is to be presented to the Candidate)*

The earliest mention of this rousing salute used by our ancestors, and which we continue to give with vigour and panache, referred to a very similar word “Bauseant” or “Basant”, which was an old French term describing a piebald horse. The Templars cared greatly for their horses and this term first referred to a horse that was marked with black and white patches. There is a lovely reference to such markings in a poem by Burns about a Ploughman’s collie – he wrote:

“His honest, sonie, baws'ny face  
Aye gat him friends in ilka place.”

The dog’s black and White, sharp-nosed features were his most attractive features.

There are some, of course, who think that “beuceant” means “well formed” or “pleasing” and in modern French it could have that interpretation, but this is unlikely; nor does it mean “well seated” in relation to the effectiveness of the good knights as horsemen.

The cry was a call to the Knights Templar in the battle to be aware of two things. One was that their standard of half black and half white was carried into warfare and they were to rally to it when summoned and to honour its presence. The other was that it was a symbol of utter dedication, a call to fight to the death rather than retreat or surrender.

In a survey of Ship Captain’s Private Flags, E.Kt. G. F. Smith discovered that in the 13<sup>th</sup> Century when a set of British ships were attacked by Norman ones the Captain ran up the “Baucan” which signalled that it was “war without quarter and the winners were to take all ships and all property of the vanquished”. That was the period of the Templars and the flag that they used was the one with the same message and the same name. When the knights shouted “A’Beuceant” they were saying these things - we commit ourselves to serve our cause to the uttermost, we will not dishonour the Order of which this flag or banner is the symbol, and we will defend each other to the last drop of our blood.

We hear about Buges de Payen who first formed the Templars, but we rarely hear of his companions. One of them was a Seigneur de Beauce. It seems highly appropriate, in calling his fellow Knights to his aid or to follow him into battle, that he should shout “A’Beuceant”.

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