

## **A Beauseant – what a great salute**

If there is one moment that will surprise, if not startle, a new member of this Order, it is when he first hears the corporate use of this phrase as a salute.

It is a rousing acknowledgement isn't it?

Yet how many of who use it with such vigour and panache really understand its background? Of course, we may be aware that this was a cry that was associated with the Templars, but what of its actual significance?

The earliest record of the word 'Bausant' was an old French term used to describe a piebald horse. When we appreciate how the Templars cared for their steeds, the use of such a term would hardly be surprising.

Specifically it referred to a horse that was marked with black and white patches and there is a memorable reference to these markings in a poem that Brother Robbie Burns wrote about a ploughmans collie:

'His honest, sonsie, baws'nt face  
Aye gat him friends in ilka place...'

(Apologies for not using an accent, you would all have recoiled in horror!)

The dogs black and white, sharp nosed features were among his most characteristic and attractive traits. However, there are some who believe that 'beauseant' means 'well formed' or 'pleasing' – a possible modern French interpretation.

I am assured that in the days of the first Templars, it did not refer to such a connotation or 'well seated' in reference to the knights effectiveness as good horsemen.

Further research suggests that as far as the Templars were concerned, the word simply referred to 'a special banner'. The cry 'a Beauseant' was a call to the Knights Templar in the midst of battle to be aware of a number of things.

One was their standard, consisting of half black and half white (a red cross on a white background by the 13<sup>th</sup> century) which was to be their spur and rallying point in conflict.

The Regulations of the Order required that in times of danger, the Beaucennifer (standard bearer) was protected by ten knights, thus honouring its presence when summoned.

The distinctive design of black and white represented the same ideas and symbolism of the carpet that adorns most Lodge rooms : good and evil, light and dark. It may even have more esoteric meanings.

What mattered most was that it offered a distinct rallying point and demanded the knights utter dedication as warriors to fight to the death if need be rather than retreat or surrender.

In his survey of the private flags of ships Captains, the late Em Kt Captain G F Smith, himself a meticulous student of matters Knight Templar, discovered that in the 13<sup>th</sup> century when English ships were attacked by Norman vessels, the senior captain ran up a colour called Baucan (pronounced Bosan).

This was to inform both his countrymen and enemy that it was war without quarter and the winners were to take all ships and property of the vanquished.

These events took place at precisely the same time as the Templars were flourishing, therefore, it is hardly surprising that the flags displayed at sea were of the same message and name as those used on land by the knights.

When the Knights Templar of old shouted 'a Beauseant' they were in effect saying 'We commit ourselves to the uttermost to serve the cause we have undertaken. We will always honour the Order of which this flag or banner is the emblem and we will defend each other to the last drop of our blood.'

It was quite a commitment!

There is also a final and interesting fact of an historical nature. The nobleman who conceived the idea of forming a band of noble fighters to protect pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land was Hughes de Payen. We may not know much of his first companions but one of them bore the title of Seigneur de Beauce. It would seem highly appropriate that when de Beauce was in the heat of battle and called to his fellow knights for aid or assistance, he would also apply a similar sounding cry: 'a Beauseant'!