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PLATE 2



St George's Chapel, Windsor: stall plate of Sir Sanchet Dabrichecourt, one of the First Founders of the Order of the Garter. Manufactured c. 1415. *See page 83.*

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A NOTE ON SIR SANCHET D'ABRICHECOURT

ONE OF THE FIRST FOUNDERS OF THE ORDER OF THE GARTER

Lisa Jefferson

The recent book by Richard Barber, *Edward III and the Triumph of England: The Battle of Crécy and the Company of the Garter* (London 2013), is excellent in many ways and has already been widely reviewed.¹ Richard Barber and I had many discussions during the latter stages of his writing this book and he generously acknowledges my help in the Preface, where he also notes that we agreed to differ over his identification of Sanchet d'Abrichecourt² as Eustache d'Auberchicourt.³ My arguments and criticisms of this view are not however given, and this brief article aims only to look at this matter, to point to the difficulties inherent in the evidence, and to restore the good name of Sir Sanchet as one of the First Founders of the Most Noble Order of the Garter. I am grateful to Clive Cheesman for comments and input on questions relating to names.

Not only does Barber insert Eustache d'Aberchicourt into the ranks of Garter knights, he also wishes to change the name found in the records and heretofore seen as *Sanchet* to *Sauchet*, a misreading and confusion between *n* and *u*. But whose misreading is this? The name *Sanchet* had at first been unfamiliar to Barber, but it is a well-attested name, common in southern France, Gascony, Spain and Portugal, a diminutive or hypocoristic form of *Sanche*, or in its Hispanic version *Sancho* (giving rise to the surname *Sanchez*).⁴ This widespread forename is variously recorded in medieval sources in vernacular forms such as *Sanzio*, *Sans*, *Santz*, *Sanz*, *Sanses*, *Sansse* or *Sens*, and in Latin ones such as *Sanctius*, *Sanccius*, *Sancius*, *Sanssius*.⁵ Augmented

¹ In this journal by Michael Hicks, *CoA* 9 (2013), no. 225, pp. 44-5.

² This surname is found in many variant spellings; it derives from the place now known as *Auberchicourt*, and Barber has adopted this spelling throughout his book. Sir Sanchet has however more traditionally been known under the spelling *Abrichecourt* used here.

³ Much previous speculation over this identification has appeared in print since the nineteenth century, and can easily be traced now via Google and the internet, but historians of the Order of the Garter have rejected or ignored this until now.

⁴ On the common name-stock extending both sides of the Pyrenees, see B. Cursente, 'Aspects de la «révolution onomastique» dans le Midi de la France (début XIe – début XIIIe siècle)', in M. Bourin et al. (edd.), *L'anthroponymie: document de l'histoire sociale des mondes méditerranéens médiévaux* (Rome 1996), pp. 41-62.

⁵ See for instance the indexes to *Gascon Register A (series of 1318-19)*, ed. G. P. Cuttino (Oxford 1976), vol. 3 and *Gascon Rolls preserved in the Public Record Office, 1307-1317*, ed. Yves Renouard (London 1962), in both of which persons are listed under their first name, making it easy to find instances of this name.

or suffixed forms like *Sanchet* include *Sansot*, *Sanson*, *Sensot*, *Sansic*, *Senchaud*, or in Latin documents *Sanchotus*, *Senchotus*, *Sansetus*.⁶ The feminine form of the name became well known in England with the arrival in 1243 of Sanchia, daughter of the Count of Provence as wife of Richard, Earl of Cornwall, and this feminine name is thereafter met with in English records, not frequently but continuously.⁷ The masculine form of the name does not seem to have been often given to English men, but the name was surely familiar due to all the many contacts between France, Gascony, Navarre, Spain, Portugal etc. Those writing and compiling the early records of the Order of the Garter, for instance the manuscript copies of the Statutes and the Windsor tables, would surely have known this name.

Barber bases his wish to change *Sanchet* to *Sauchet* on his and others' readings of the name as spelt thus in various manuscripts. But confusion between *n* and *u* is notorious and in many medieval and later hands the letters are indistinguishable, in particular when linked on one or both sides to another letter. Indeed, even in modern handwriting one can find an *n* written exactly like a *u*. Sometimes, with some scripts, one can be sure that a letter is certainly an *n*, but to be sure that a *u* is a *u*, if that leads to an odd spelling of a word or name, is very problematical.

That said, a form of the name *Sanchet* with a *u* is possible and indeed is found, as a result of the standard Middle English and Anglo-Norman treatment of the short /a/ sound before a nasal in French.⁸ Uncertainty over how to reproduce and represent the quality of the vowel in this phonetic environment very often produced /au/, as either a temporary or a lasting sound change. Familiar cases where the new vowel is preserved in Modern English include *launch* (Mod. Fr. *lancer*), *Maundy* (Latin *mandatum*, by way of Fr. *mande(t)*) and the appropriately heraldic *maunch* (Mod. Fr. *manche*). In many other words the change was more ephemeral and co-existed with a form preserving the French /a/: examples include *daunce*, *dauns* or *dawnse* (Mod. Eng. *dance*, Fr. *danser*) and, for that matter, *(ex)saumpel* (Mod. Eng. *example*, *sample*) and *chaunge* (cf. Mod. Eng. *change*, Fr. *changer*). In Anglo-Norman the same phenomenon is seen, with documentary sources of Sir Sanchet's own day (among them the records of the Order of the Garter itself) frequently offering free variations such as *saunz* alongside *sanz* (Mod. Fr. *sans*, 'without'), *daungier* alongside *dangier* (Mod. Fr. *danger*), *saunte* alongside *sante* (Mod. Fr. *santé*) and countless other similar cases.⁹ The names of the Anglo-Norman elite were subject to the same variable

⁶ Parallels to the relationship *Sanche* > *Sanchet* / *Sansot* etc. are seen in other Midi name groups such as *Peyre* > *Peyret*, *Peyron*, *Peyrot*; *Joan* > *Joannet*, *Joannot*, *Joannon*. In the case of *Sanson* there may be contamination from the Biblical name *Sa(m/n)son*, independently used in the Midi.

⁷ See for instance E. G. Withycombe, *The Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names* (2nd edn., Oxford 1973), p. 251.

⁸ E. S. Sheldon, 'On Anglo-French and Middle English *au* for French *a* before a nasal', *Harvard Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature* 5 (1896), pp. 69-75.

⁹ See *Anglo-Norman Dictionary*, edd. W. Rothwell et al. (London 1977-92; rev. edn., 2005-), s.vv.

treatment: one may note that throughout his book Barber refers to Sir Walter Mauny, whom others have most often called Sir Walter Manny.¹⁰

Therefore the form *Saunchet* is only to be expected on occasion. Furthermore, medieval scribes used many abbreviations, one of the most common of which is the reduction of the nasals *m* or *n* in words such as those cited just above to a line over the preceding vowel: thus *saūz*, *daūce*, *exsaūple*, etc. This abbreviation mark can easily become faded with time, but can also be missing, a spelling error. However it is important to understand that the presence of the nasal was essential to the sound change /a/ > /au/, whether or not it was abbreviated out in writing.

Thus if one finds in a manuscript the name *Sauchet* or *Sausset* or some other variant it may be a misreading of one's own for *Sanchet*; it may be an abbreviated form standing for *Saunchet* or *Saunsset*; or it may be a case of a later scribe, unfamiliar with the name, misreading and thus miscopying an earlier exemplar. In nineteenth-century editions of manuscripts, where such a spelling with *u* is found, the likelihood is that this is an editorial misreading.¹¹ In all cases it will be a form, correct or incorrect, of the name most commonly written as *Sanchet*, and this is how, over the six and a half centuries since the Order of the Garter was founded, all historians have interpreted the name found in the records. There is no need to see it as a completely different Christian or first name. Yet this is what Barber has assumed:

Sausset is a very rare name, apparently confined to a few families on the borders of Ponthieu and Hainault. There is a Sausset in the d'Aisne family: the lord of Aisne is mentioned as present at Buignicourt in 1326. This man's son is named Gerard, and Sausset is clearly a nickname. ... In 1339 he is Gerardo dicto Sausseto d'Enne, but in 1342 he becomes simply Sausset d'Aisne ... The meaning of this nickname has unfortunately been lost. The only modern writer to discuss the adoption of nicknames in Hainault at this period implies that it is in some way pejorative, but fails to give any justification for this idea: he suggests that it might mean red-faced or blotchy. Subsequent dictionaries of names assume that it is related to 'sause' sauce and hence derives from the cook's red face. But this begs the question as to why there should be a group of men from the same small circle of families with the same disfigurement (though it could conceivably have been hereditary). It seems much more likely that it is some kind of private language whose meaning was soon forgotten.¹²

Is it not even more likely that the readings of *Sausset*, *Sauses*, *Sausse* which Barber has found in modern printed editions have been misreadings of a manuscript, or even

¹⁰ The entry on him in the *Oxford DNB*, by Jonathan Sumption, names him as *Mauny*, giving *Manny* as an alternative, whereas the old *DNB* had him under *Manny*, with *Mauny* the alternative.

¹¹ One may note that in the volume of the *Calendar of Patent Rolls* cited above, an entry on p. 383 gives a name as 'Reymund Saus', which the indexer has amended to 'Saus or Sans', clearly aware that *Sans* is no doubt the correct reading.

¹² Barber, *op. cit.* pp. 501-2. This passage encapsulates a misunderstanding of the way names are spread or transferred; there is no obligation for all bearers of a by-name based on *sause* to have shared whatever physical or other characteristic prompted its first use; any name can spread by simple association.

misprintings by the nineteenth-century printer from a handwritten text given him to set up in type? And more likely that the small circle of families favoured the name otherwise found as *Sanche* or *Sanchet*, given the ties and contacts between this northern area of France and more southern areas, Navarre in particular? The Auberchicourt family certainly had well-attested connections with Navarre.¹³ One should also note that the modern French surnames *Saucet*, *Sauchet* and *Sausset* are generally held to derive not from a given name but from one of a range of place names well represented all over France, Belgium and elsewhere; these place names in turn refer either to a salt marsh or salt pan (Latin *sals(e)a*, *salsarium*, *salsedo*), or to a willow grove (Fr. *saussaie*, *sauçaie* < Latin *salicetum*).¹⁴

Bearing in mind that the form or rather forms of the name found in the various records is one issue, and the question of whether these refer to one person or two is another; let us turn to the archival sources, other than those relating to the Order of the Garter, that contain mention of Sanchet d'Abrichecourt. The earliest is dated 20 October 1345 when, in the reading of the editor of the *Calendar of Patent Rolls*, 'Saussetus Daubrichecourt' is awarded all the chattels of a John Wardedieu, who has been indicted for murder and has fled.¹⁵ The next in date of what happened (though not of the manuscript which relates this) is Froissart's account of the drama of the burghers of Calais, where one of the men escorting the six burghers through the English lines is named as Sanse d'Aubrecicourt.¹⁶ The third mention is dated 31 July 1353 when the brother of Sanchet, Nicolas d'Abrichecourt, is paid £200 by Margaret, duchess of Hainault, owed for wages to his brother Sanchet, who has served the duchess in the wars in Zeeland and on the Maas.¹⁷ One must question why the payment is made to Nicolas and not directly to Sanchet, and the obvious guess is that Sanchet has died before this date – which is indeed what historians have thought from the separate evidence of the traditional lists of occupants of the Garter stalls in St George's Chapel, where Sir William Fitzwaryn was probably elected to Sir Sanchet's stall in 1349, holding the stall until his death on 28 October 1361, after which William Lord Latimer was elected,

¹³ Eustache himself served the King of Navarre for many years, his wife was a cousin of the king, and the rulers of Navarre had possessions and strong links in the north of France.

¹⁴ See for instance Marie-Thérèse Morlet, *Dictionnaire étymologique des noms de famille* (rev. edn., Paris 1997), pp. 885-7.

¹⁵ *CPR 1343-5*, p. 557.

¹⁶ 'Et au matin elle fist donner a casquin siis nobles, et les fist conduire hors de l'oost par mesire Sanse d'Aubrecicourt et mesire Paon de Ruet ...'. Froissart, *Chroniques, début du premier livre, édition du manuscrit de Rome reg. Lat. 869*, ed. George T. Diller (Textes littéraires français 194: Geneva 1972), p. 849; see also *Œuvres de Froissart*, ed. Baron Kervyn de Lettenhove (Brussels 1867-77), *Chroniques* tome 5 (1346-56), p. 215.

¹⁷ 'Par lettres medame, données à Caisnoit le mercredi nuit Saint Pière entrant aoust l'an dessusdit, payet à monsigneur Nicole d'Auberchicourt, lesquels medame le contesse pooit devoir à lui pour monsigneur Sausset d'Auberchicourt, sen frère, liquel servi medite dame en ses wières de Zélende et sur le Maize, si qu'il appert par cheste lettre. – ij^e li.' *Cartulaire des Comtes de Hainaut, de l'avènement de Guillaume II à la mort de Jacqueline de Bavière*, ed. Léopold Devillers (Brussels 1881), vol. 1 appendice III, p. 770.

Figure 1: 'S' Sanset dabrychcurtte' in a surcoat of his arms and Garter robes. Detail from an engraving of the original knights of the Garter, in E. Ashmole, *The Institutions, Laws, and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter* (London 1672), inserted between pp. 642 and 643.



most probably in 1362, the Wardrobe accounts recording issue of robes of the Order to him annually from 1371 to 1373, and then from 1375 to 1378.¹⁸

These three archival traces of the man named Sanchet d'Abrichecourt, as well as the consistent traditional listing of him as one of the First Founders of the Order of the Garter, do not amount to a clear picture of him but do attest to his existence. Barber, who wishes to prove that Sanchet and his brother Eustache were one and the same person, dismisses this evidence in the following way: (i) keeping the reading of the name as *Sausetus* for the 1345 document; (ii) saying for the 1347 evidence that 'the likely reading for "Sanse" is "Sause"'; (iii) keeping the reading of the name as *Sausset* for the 1353 record; (iv) linking the first two records to two others to a 'Stacy' Dabrichcourt and a 'Tassyn' Dabrigecourt and saying 'These are all Eustache'. Two paragraphs later he links the four names together.¹⁹ But *Stacy* and *Tassyn* can easily be seen as familiar hypocoristic forms of the name *Eustache*, whereas *Sausset* and *Sanse* cannot. Barber further says that 'there are no documents that imply the existence of both Sausset and Eustace at the same time'²⁰ – but there are, over the period in ques-

¹⁸ G. F. Beltz, *Memorials of the Order of the Garter from its Foundation to the Present Time* (London 1841), p. 146.

¹⁹ Barber, pp. 500-1.

²⁰ Barber, p. 502.

tion, the two mentions of Sansset and Sanse and the mentions of Stacy and Tassyn being references respectively to Sanchet and Eustache. One may note also that Barber says that the name attached to the representation of Sir Sanchet in the Bruges Garter Book reads as *Sausetus*, as does Hollar's engraving of the images of the First Founders. The Bruges Garter Book images can nowadays be easily seen on the internet, on the British Library site or on Wikipedia, each illustrating the entry for the relevant Garter knight, and it is a brave claim to say that the third letter of that name is a *u* if one compares it to the *n* of the name Sir Neel Loring, that of the Duke of Lancaster, or the letters *u* and *n* both appearing for Sir Hugh Courtenay.²¹ Equally, if one reads *Sauset* in Hollar's engraving for Ashmole of 'The Portraits of King Edward the 3^d with the first 25 Knights Companiōs in the habit of the order and surcoats of their armes' (see **Figure 1**, previous page) then one must also read 'S. Johu de Lysle' and 'S. Johu Beauchāp'. With this type of script, a reading of *n* or *u* will lie in the eye of the beholder and his or her expectations of a word; I read the name there as *Sanset*.²²

Let us turn now to Sir Eustache: from Barber's account, taken from Froissart's numerous references and a number of other sources, he was a distinctly unsavoury character, certainly not a 'chevalier sans reproche' as required by the statutes of the Garter. Other early Knights of the Garter were perhaps not angels, but Barber points up indeed how the accounts in Froissart's chronicles of Eustache's activities were seen through 'possibly rose-tinted lenses',²³ how Eustache was 'a freebooter, one of the leaders of the dreaded companies'.²⁴ As Barber says, 'the reality behind Froissart's portrait of "a very valiant knight" points to a man whose lifestyle was much more ruthless, devious and precarious',²⁵ whose income from 'freebooting in 1358-9 in Champagne [was] less a question of ransoms than of extortion from the local populace in best Mafia style'.²⁶

Not the sort of man who fulfils the high requirements of chivalry which have always been associated with the Garter, but this cannot on its own disprove his membership. On the other hand, Barber's claim that Eustache's career 'corresponds for the most part to the pattern of similar Garter knights',²⁷ and emphasis on his family's relationships and his involvement in a variety of campaigns and activities with Edward III, with the Black Prince and with other Garter knights, do not in any way prove that he was elected to the Order. Many other men were similarly involved but never belonged to it.

More telling are two other points. First, the traditional records of succession to the stalls in St George's Chapel give the successor to Sir Sanchet d'Abrihecourt as Sir William Fitzwaryn, and the latter's successor in turn as William Lord Latimer,

²¹ BL Ms Stowe 594. Full description and images at www.bl.uk/catalogues/illuminatedmanuscripts/record.asp?MSID=7656&CollID=21&NStart=594. See also en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bruges_Garter_Book.

²² Elias Ashmole, *The Institutions, Laws, and Ceremonies of the Most Noble Order of the Garter* (London 1672), inserted between pp. 642 and 643.

²³ Barber, p. 504.

²⁴ Barber, p. 504.

²⁵ Barber, p. 510.

²⁶ Barber, p. 403.

²⁷ Barber, p. 509.

Fitzwaryn's death being reliably recorded on 28 October 1361; issue of robes for the Garter feast to Latimer are equally reliably recorded for 1371 and 1372.²⁸ Eustache was still alive not only in 1361 but even in 1371-2. The Windsor tables which are our source of information for the succession to the stalls may not be fully reliable but it cannot be denied that Fitzwaryn was a companion of the Order, since his tomb effigy in Wantage church represents him wearing the garter; and if he and Latimer did not occupy this stall, which other could they have? Stallplates for all three men survive in their stall and though of course we now know that these were made later, in about 1415, they nevertheless bear good witness to a strong tradition.

The second point relates to the award of the chattels of John Wardedieu to Sansetus/Sausetus d'Abrichecourt in October 1345, recorded in the Patent Rolls. Now in 1344-5 Eustache was a squire in the retinue of William II of Hainault campaigning in Prussia; Barber hypothesizes that he came to England in September 1345, but this is merely in order to allow this historical record to be assigned to Eustache.²⁹ More plausible is that Eustache was still at this date a young squire with William of Hainault and that the award of 1344-5 was indeed to *Sansetus*, that is to say to Sanchet.

A problem might also be mentioned over the later generations of this family. Traditionally, the Sir John Dabridgecourt who was elected to the Order in 1413 is said to have been a grandson of Sir Sanchet d'Abrichecourt, his father, Sanchet's son, having married Elizabeth de Say, the Dabridgecourts becoming English subjects and holders for several centuries of the Manor of Stratfield Saye. Eustache cannot be accounted an ancestor of these as his two sons are known by name, François and William, neither of them married into the Saye family.³⁰

'The first rule of history is to go to the best source.' For the names of the First Founders of the Order of the Garter, the records of the Order itself, however lacunose and late they may be, must surely be taken as the best source, and here the name is always given as *Sanchet*, never in any reference as *Eustache*. The Windsor tables which give his name were not drawn up until 1401-2, and we only have later copies of these, but certainly they were based on earlier records existent at the time. The earliest statutes of the Order, where the name appears as *Sanchet*, are now known to date only from 1415 and our earliest manuscript copy is even later than this – but again the list of names was surely based on earlier records, kept at Windsor and in London too no doubt. The stallplates (see **Plate 3**) date from about 1415 also – and again were based on earlier records. To read the name in any of these or other records as *Sauchet* not *Sanchet* (or any variant on this) does not invalidate the record that the 25th place in the Order was held by a man named Sanchet d'Abrichecourt, *Sanchet* being the regularised spelling of this name in the same way as one regularises *Jehan* to *John*, *Watier* to *Walter*, and *Fysemonde* to *Fitzsimon*. It is likewise very hard to imagine that those keeping the records of this prestigious order would have listed, as Barber claims, one of the first founders under a nickname or by-name rather than the standard forename that he was usually known by. Eustache lived until 1372, was constantly involved with the English court, campaigning with Edward III and his son

²⁸ Beltz, p. 146.

²⁹ Barber, pp. 389, 500.

³⁰ Barber, p. 508.

and other Garter companions, in all the records for which he is named Eustace; had he been elected to the Order, is *this* not the most likely form for his name to be recorded in, rather than some nickname, pejorative or not?³¹ Leaving the nickname question aside, would Froissart, in all his many accounts of Eustache and his activities, not somewhere have said that he was a companion of the Garter?

In conclusion, the idea that Eustache d'Auberschicourt might have been a companion of the Order of the Garter seems entirely improbable; the evidence adduced by Barber does not hold up to scrutiny. Eustache's brother, Sir Sanchet d'Abrichecourt, is certainly a shadowy figure in the historical records, but so are so many other fourteenth-century persons. Unless and until any other evidence turn up to state unequivocally that Eustache and Sanchet were one and the same person, we must surely maintain the name and memory of Sir Sanchet d'Abrichecourt as one of the First Founders of the Order of the Garter.

³¹ The interpretation of the meaning of this nickname, if it ever existed as such (see above p. 79), is in doubt but Barber's suggestion that it had some now lost private meaning changes nothing. Most nicknames in the true sense carry several levels of meaning, some of which will have been restricted to a narrow, possibly tiny, language community. Nor is the potential pejorative sense of the name a problem; pejorative by-names could stick and enter formal use even for members of the Anglo-Norman elite (e.g. *Mauduit*, *Basset*). A by-name could on occasion subvert or replace a given name, as for instance in the case of the 11th-century lord of Clun in Shropshire, Robert de Say *qui cognominatur Picot*, generally known as Picot de Say: see L. C. Loyd, edd. C. T. Clay and D. C. Douglas, *The Origins of Some Anglo-Norman Families* (Leeds 1951), p. 96. The pattern of name-use and name-recording implied by Barber's theory is, however, extremely improbable.