

NAXOS
AudioBooks

Guy de Maupassant

Normandy Stories

Read by **Oliver Montgomery**

CLASSIC
FICTION

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1	In The Country	14:13
2	Pierrot	11:56
3	A Normandy Joke	10:26
4	A Cock Crowed	11:53
5	Old Boniface's Crime	13:19
6	The Confession	17:01
7	An Apparition	17:46
8	The Little Cask	12:42
9	The Castaway	19:16
10	Bombard	13:11
11	Master Belhomme's Beast	16:23

Total time: 2:38:29

Cover picture: Blenheim 1878 by Thomas Faed (1826-1900)
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Guy de Maupassant

Normandy Stories

Throughout his career as a writer, Guy de Maupassant returned incessantly to the theme of Normandy. Around sixty of his ‘nouvelles’ (short stories) use it as the background to their plot. This enduring loyalty gives us reason to attribute to the author the declaration of one of his characters: “I love this land. My roots are here”.

It is important to remember that Guy de Maupassant was born in Fécamp in 1850; that he spent the first nineteen years of his life in Normandy; that when he built his house, La Guillette (on the proceeds of his first collection of stories, *The Tellier House*), he chose to build it in Etretat; and that he visited Normandy at least once a year until his death in 1893.

It is common knowledge that Normandy has a changeable climate, similar to that of Britain. Due to the wind, sun and rain alternate in quick succession. Summers can be splendid and winters either harsh or mild. We find this same diversity in the characters of those who inhabit the **Normandy Stories** of Guy de Maupassant. Drunkards, jokers, saucy comedians (*A Normandy Joke*, *Old Boniface’s Crime*), gluttons and the frequently-wicked (*The Little Cask*), they display at the same time the capacity for great generosity and possess a deep sense of honour.

The short stories presented in this

recording illustrate some of the characteristics of the native Norman according to Maupassant and also of the land itself – its varying seasons, its landscapes composed of countryside and coastline, its large farms, its cottages, chateaus and holiday villas. We rub shoulders there with a great number of peasants, as well as some fishermen and sailors. These are all ‘common folk’ yet there are also people of ‘respectable society’ here – the bourgeoisie and provincial aristocracy, keen hunters, and especially ladies and gentlemen of Paris! They are here in the guise of holidaymakers, tourists, and English ladies (*Bombard*). Finally, like a recurring nightmare, the dark winter of war of 1870, with its succession of humiliations and horrors, still hangs over the Normandy countryside. Its horror cannot be brushed over. Indeed, rare are the Maupassant stories which are happy from start to finish. Even the spiciest of tales (e.g. *A Normandy Joke*, *Old Boniface’s Crime*) bears, at least, the marks of an unpleasant mortification, and at worst the seal of death.

But, better than any commentary, let me invite you to listen to Guy de Maupassant himself, via the voices of the actors, as he tells his **Normandy Stories**...

Notes by J. P. Bruckmuller
Translated by Anna Britten

The music on this CD taken from the NAXOS Catalogue

CHABRIER Piano Works Vol. 1 & 2
Georges Rabol, Piano

8.553009 & 8.553010

Guy de Maupassant

Normandy Stories

Read by **Oliver Montgomery**

Maupassant is hailed as one of the greatest masters of the short story. This collection focusses upon the land he knew and loved so well – Normandy. Its people and its countryside are portrayed here in vivid colour and with great warmth. Amusing, saucy, and sometimes even farcical they may be, but they are also capable of great pathos, often branching off to end tragically. It is this skilful and affecting blend of tragedy and comedy, of tears and laughter, which make Maupassant's **Normandy Stories** the enduring favourites they are today.



Oliver Montgomery studied French at University before training at the Webber Douglas Academy of Dramatic Art. He has wide experience of theatre, including work for Peter Hall in his production of *Hamlet* at the Gielgud Theatre. His television work includes *Look At The State We're In* with Geoffrey Palmer.

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