

# REVILLE

Located south of Montfarville, Reville is a larger village (2500 acres - 1100 inhabitant )

The church was built on a 12 m high hillock, the steeple can therefore be seen from far around. The granite norman style chancel and aisles underwent sorry restaurations; the nave and the tower date from the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century, the St James's chapel from the 15<sup>th</sup> century and the Holy Virgin's chapel from the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Several paintings by Guillaume Fouace can be admired in the church. The best one recently exhibited in the christening chapel represents a baptism ceremony in Reville ( Guillaume Fouace's as it seems). It is so finely observed, so true to life in its precision, its mastership is striking. Nothing is missing, check for the family umbrella standing against a pillar, check for the large basket filled with sugarplum paper cones.

In Reville churchyard, a magnificent white marble statue always draws the amazed visitor's attention; it was made by Fouace when he lost his daughter Beatrix aged 15. While admiring the beautiful maiden asleep as it were, one can't help remembering Lamartine's verses:

Oh tell me, ye flower whose lifespan has too soon been withered away,  
Isn't there a place somewhere, where all could be brought to bloom again



## Guillaume Fouace (1837- 1895)

Guillaume Fouace was born on arch 21<sup>st</sup> 1837 at Jonville hamlet, very near Reville.

His parents were humble peasants and he went to the local school till the age of 16, he therefore spent time working in the fields till the age of 30. Though he had no artistic education, he would enjoy drawing marines, landscapes, rural scenes during his leisure time.

At Reville manor house, his first sketches were favourably noticed. Young Fouace was recommended to Mr Henry, curator at the Cherbourg Museum and he settled there in Bassin street.

Mr Henry had him copy several paintings and mould a clay statue, he acknowledged the artistic gift of the young peasant. He got a scholarship from the town authorities amounting to 400 fr which the family supplemented with 200 fr. Thanks to this small sum of money,

Fouace went to Paris, lived there for 6 months copying one of Vauban's portraits and a painting by Guido.

At his tether's end, he came back to Reville. Cherbourg city authorities allowed him a grant of 600 fr and he went back to Paris. He joined Yvon's studio, attended classes at the future Ecole des Arts Decoratifs and was accepted at the Painting Exhibition in 1869.

The war stopped his work which he resumed later with more dedication, he was awarded honours in 1881, a third class medal in 1891, a first class medal in 1893.

He was excellent at still-lives but never let himself be limited to this genre despite a few contestants. "I do what I like to do" he used to tell envious people. A genuine artist, he only followed his own inspiration and his unfailing good taste. Yet he succeeded in all the genre he exerted himself.

He met several heydays at the end of his life. The first one occurred in 1888 when the <fine Arts director offered to buy one of his paintings possibly for the Luxembourg Palace, unfortunately the painting had been sold in the meantime. The next year, President Sadi Carnot expressed his admiration for *the Lent Lunch* and the Fine Arts director bought it for the dining hall at the Elysée Palace ( it is now at the Cherbourg museum). In 1890 and 1891, Fouace had two paintings bought for the Luxembourg Palace *my fishing spree* and *treats for dinner*.

However a terrible grief clouded his family life; in 1888 he lost his eldest daughter Beatrix hardly aged 15. He then turned to sculpting to create the marble statue which can still be admired on her tomb at Reville churchyard and which received an award in 1890 under the name *the last sleep*.

Guillaume Fouace died on January 7<sup>th</sup> 1895 from a lung disease just as he <as about to be rewarded with the Légion d'Honneur. His corpse was buried in Reville, by the seaside, in the same tomb he had adorned with his daughter's statue.

The " kind giant" as he was called because of his square chin, his expressive face and his thick beard, was not only a great artist but a generous heart. " He had remained simple, direct, true, talkative with his long time childhood friends as he came every year, straight to their cottages to meet them again without ceremony. This man was the pride of Reville and his death was grievously felt. His memory remains in the heart of everyone of the local peasants and fishermen who enjoy recalling each and every detail of his life among them." wrote V.Bacon in the booklet he dedicated to his life.