

Redland Past Revisited for the Redland Directory- No. 9 in a series.

A Christmas story

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How many notice the carving resembling Madonna & Child in a wall niché at the corner of Clyde and Hampton Roads? Some years ago when it was new I also wondered and being curious knocked on the door of Foley Cottage and asked about its significance. The then owner, a gracious lady by the name of Mary Gray did not mind and explained. An artist and sculptress, she was rebuilding her garden wall and during the bad weather decided to occupy her time carving this little study of a mother and child. It had no significance other than perhaps her knowledge of the cottage's earlier occupant, Ada Vachell, who established a Bristol Guild for handicapped children, now commemorated by a blue plaque on the garden wall, and by a memorial in Bristol Cathedral. Mary said that she had carved it just for the artistic pleasure. Here the story would have ended but for a double twist. Mary Gray later told me that for some years an unknown person annually placed a bunch of flowers in the niché. Perhaps another story for another time?

To bring the story up to date, I'm sure that Mary Gray would be pleased to know that the present owners, Simond & Beatrice have a family tradition in which they place a lighted candle there at Christmas thus linking her delightful Madonna & Child to the Christmas celebrations.

