

'STELLA MARIS' and 'Sea Point', Berkeley Road

The Misses Curonico built 'Stella Maris' in Semaphore Road and then added to it bit by bit. They then built 'Sea Point' on the Berkeley Road corner of Semaphore Road. In 1925 this is listed under the occupation of Madame Marte, with Miss Curonico in 'Stella Maris'.

The two ladies, who originally came from Italy, ran a high-class dress salon in Knightsbridge, London. The wife of the Headmaster of Westminster School was a client of the dress shop. The headmaster was a very tall and striking man in appearance.

In 1946, Mr Bates (Vida Bates' father) and his wife bought 'Stella Maris' when he retired from his business in Chatham High Street. He had a large family and although all of them had left home by then, they often came down to visit their parents. They would naturally bring down their own families, so the rambling house echoed with the sounds of children for many years.

The next family to own the old house was the Gibbs family - again a large family, who frequently 'invaded' their parents' haven, much to the delight of Phyllis and Clifford Gibbs. Their son Robert was the last permanent resident, although several of his family were frequent visitors. Robert now lives at St Nicholas-at-Wade. The house is the subject of planning permission debates at the moment - with suggestion for demolition and the insertion of three properties. This would put a heavy burden on the narrow unadopted Semaphore Road, but whatever happens, the house is in dire need of a lot of restoration. It has been sadly neglected for a number of years.