Tourism in Studland really began in the 1890s when the Bankes Estate started selling off leasehold building plots along the main road. Studland Brickworks was set up in the summer of 1892 at Wadmore.

Over the next 10 years most of the houses were built of Studland bricks, which are still in good order. A lot of these plots were bought by wealthy people living in other parts of the country. From the census returns and the register of electors, most of these were used as holiday homes, only occupied in the summer months. Eventually they were able to purchase the freehold. One of these was Kyalami (now Studland Bay House) built by Sir Eustace Fiennes.

In the early 1900s what became known as the Bloomsbury set rented Cliff End for several summers. The antics of Virginia Woolf, her sister Vanessa Bell and their various partners scandalised the local population.

On the 1911 census a number of houses were listed as unoccupied. They were Chine Head, High Hedges, Coombe House, Cliff End, Glen View, The Cottage, The Knapp, Church Cottage, Aldwych, Longmead, The Manor House, Stable Cottage and another cottage, unnamed at the time but later known as Manor Cottage.
The beach at Studland Bay, July 1954

Thirteen boarding houses were also listed, one being Harbour View, (now Seacombe), run by Jacob and Lottie Gibbons. Jacob worked as a gardener for Sir Eustace and, after he had had an appendix operation, Sir Eustace secured a position for Jacob as a steward on the Titanic, thinking the sea air would be good for his recuperation. Luckily Jacob survived.

One of his frequent visitors was Lord Baden Powell who stayed six times at Harbour View when visiting his friend Alexander Berens, who lived next door at Full Stop, (Sandyholme).
Quite a few village people moved into garden sheds so they could let out their cottages in the summer. Visitors rented the cottages for a month or the whole summer. They travelled to Swanage by train to be met by one of the Loveless family’s horse drawn carriages or by George King in his carriage.

By the 1920s a number of village ladies offered bed and breakfast accommodation, my grandmother being one of them. I have her visitors’ book. She took guests right through the war years and up to 1965. Many of them were regular visitors who would mostly travel by train. They would send their luggage in advance and it was brought from Swanage by the local carrier. Some wanted full board and supplied their own food which their landlady cooked for them. In the 1950s five of the 12 houses at Pinewood Cottages offered B&B.

Also in the 1920s the Gondolier boats from Poole would land passengers on the new landing stage at what is now known as Middle Beach. They would proceed up the lane to the waiting carriages for a jaunt around Studland. Albert and Jane Churchill at Beach Cottage saw the opportunity and around 1926 opened a refreshment room serving ‘high teas’ to these passengers.

Local fishermen the Masters and Paynes started using their boats to give pleasure trips around the bay, making use of the landing stage.

More and more beach huts appeared on the beach. Some belonged to local residents and others were for hire, weekly or for the summer.
In the 1930s more people were travelling to Studland by car, so Albert Churchill at Beach Cottage opened a car park in the field next to the cottage. It’s now a National Trust overflow car park.

During the Second World War the beach was out of bounds and all the beach hut owners had to remove their huts. Anti tank ‘dragons teeth’ were installed, some of which can still be seen now. Lots of barbed wire defences were built.

After the war a new beach cafe was built and run by Daphne Bankes, the sister of Ralph Bankes. The wooden building that had served refreshments from the early 1900s had been moved several times from its original position. This became the beach shop which sold all manner of beach requisites such as buckets and spades, swimwear and sun creams as well as cigarettes and sweets.

I worked at the beach shop in the summers of 1964 and 65. It was run then by Eric and Sybil Rhodes. Eric was the land agent for the Bankes Estate. The beach huts were run by Commander Charles Grant, who was a friend of Ralph Bankes.
When I was a child in the 1950s we spent most of the summers on the beach. Our mothers would give us a packed lunch and, as we always went to the same spot, they knew where to find us when they came in the afternoon.

There weren’t that many people on the beach at that time but by the 1960s when more people had cars, the beach got really crowded - particularly at weekends.

On Sundays there would be a long queue of cars waiting to get into the car parks and the police would stop the traffic at Corfe Castle and not let any more in. When it was time to go home there would be queues of cars right through the village. It must have taken hours to get home. There were also long queues at the ferry.