



What did you do before the Lighthouse ?

My first career was at British Airways where my jobs ranged from telephone sales to marketing and I worked in New York, Glasgow, and London. But I always knew that wasn't what I wanted to do for the rest of my life. My mum and I had been lucky during school holidays to travel to far off places with my dad who was a captain on oil tankers, and this gave me a love for the sea and watching marine wildlife. So, after originally studying business and 7 years in a completely different field, I left BA and studied marine biology at the University of Aberdeen. It was a big change, both exciting and scary, but I have no regrets, although I do sometimes miss the travelling perks!

What do you do at the Lighthouse ?

My first work at the field station was mixing concrete and helping plumb in the toilet on Eynhallow – I think Paul was testing me to see how keen I really was to work in ecology! I have now been running the individual based bottlenose dolphin study for the last 10 years. This project has been key to the conservation and management of this small population, underpinning the designation of the Moray Firth Special Area of Conservation and has provided rare evidence of increasing reproduction and calf survival in a cetacean population using a protected area. Working at the Lighthouse in a small team also means I am fortunate to have the opportunity to collaborate on our other projects including an occasional return to Eynhallow. I owe a huge thanks to Susan Lusseau who trained and recommended me for this job, and to Paul for taking a chance on someone with little photo-ID experience to be a part of and help develop this project.

What advice would you give someone who wants to follow in your footsteps ?

It is never too late to achieve your goals and there are different ways to do it. My time at university, especially my PhD, has helped me in this line of work but equally, or sometimes I think more beneficial, has been developing my practical skills, from boat driving to first aid to photography and even making concrete!



Dr Barbara Cheney

Honours, PhD & Research Fellow • 2005 - present

