



## Dr Karen Gardiner

Honours • 1989 • Returned in 1991 & 1992



### What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

In 1989 I joined Paul and Phil Hammond in the office in Paul's house in Jemimaville - the Lighthouse Field Station didn't even exist then. My Zoology honours project was doing behavioural observations on common/harbour seal mothers and pups as well as counts in the Dornoch Firth with my trusty field assistant Paul's dog. Along with Justine Knowles's project on the bottlenose dolphins off Chanonry Point these were the first two undergraduate projects for the field station. Paul and Sarah were kind enough to let me live in their house, a great act of kindness. As people they were ahead of their time thinking about the environment and into recycling and sustainability. I returned in 1991 and 1992 during my PhD by which time the Field Station was setup. We were catching harbour seals in the Dornoch Firth, taking blood samples to measure a series of endocrine hormones to establish the first endocrine profiles for this species.

### What are you doing now ?

I am now Managing Director of a healthcare company called Purple Orchid Health. I have stayed in reproductive health since the late 90's, moving from marine mammals to people. I have setup and run seven different companies over the last 24 years, five of them in reproductive health, so the foundation blocks that were laid in 1989 in many ways set the path on which I was to travel and my passion for endocrinology remains to this day. Purple Orchid is a SME and since starting this company in 2013 we have grown it to 8 people and a turnover of 3.6M. I love what I do, it never feels like work and I am lucky to have a brilliant team around me. However, my heart belongs to large mammals and when my daughter graduates as a vet we have plans to return to some research together on large mammals.

### What's the best advice you have been given ?

Grab every opportunity life offers you with both hands, don't think about it too much, just do it. Be a human doing not a human being.

