



Dr Sarah Marley
Honours Student • 2008



© Sarah Marley

What did you do at the Lighthouse ?

I first visited the Lighthouse on a fieldtrip during my BSc Zoology (Hons) at the University of Aberdeen. This was my first time ever out on a boat and seeing dolphins close up, despite watching them from shore throughout childhood. I met Paul Thompson and Barbara Cheney, and was lucky enough to then secure an Honours project working with them and the dolphins. My project looked at tooth rake scarring in dolphins, and how intensity of this varied between both the sexes and different populations. We eventually published the research, and it is still a project I am very proud to have been involved with!

What are you doing now ?

After my BSc Zoology (Hons) I completed an MRes Marine Mammal Science at the University of St Andrews. After graduating I spent time travelling around Australia volunteering on different marine mammal projects, mostly working with bottlenose dolphins, humpback whales, and blue whales. I then got a PhD and eventually postdocs in Western Australia studying the effects of noise pollution on marine mammal behaviour and underwater soundscapes. In 2018, I returned to the UK and I am now a Senior Lecturer in Marine Biology at the University of Portsmouth. I love being able to continue my marine mammal research and also give students the same experiences that I treasure from my own time at university!

What was your best experience at the Lighthouse ?

I spent several weeks at the Lighthouse whilst doing my Honours project. I think it was a perfect first experience for a student, with a friendly, tight-knit group of likeminded people. Barbara Cheney and Clare Embling in particular were so encouraging. I wasn't very confident back then, but they introduced me to MARMAM, encouraged me to join the SMM, and told me I "just had to come up for the student SMM conference" a few months later. This was life-changing, because it suddenly opened the door to the marine mammal community! And now, 12yrs later I am still working in a field that I love.

