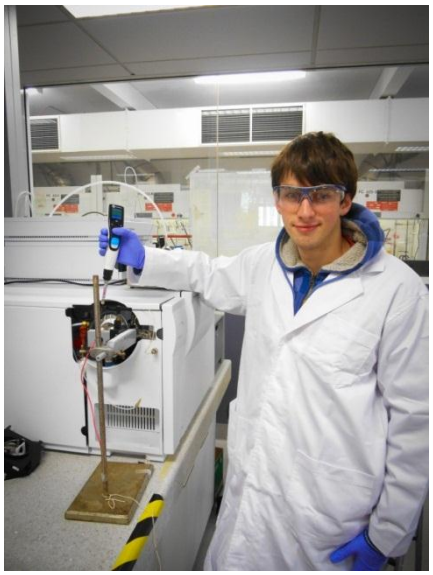
Ben Gaskell

Chemical Researcher



I study blood! Blood is actually a very complex mixture that contains *thousands* of different chemical compounds, including fats, proteins, red blood cells and many more.

To look for just one thing in blood can be quite difficult, time consuming and require large volumes of expensive toxic chemicals, but the reason we go to all this effort is because this information can help us to identify, understand and treat diseases in the body.

There are scientists all over the world that are looking for better ways of searching for these compounds and my research is related to one of these new techniques – paper spray mass spectrometry. It is a very simple technique which requires only very tiny volumes of blood sample whilst being able to obtain valuable chemical information in less than a minute.

So how did I end up becoming a scientist? When I was at college I had absolutely no idea what sort of career I'd end up in or what I was really good at so I chose to do a very wide range of subjects. I quickly discovered (much to my amazement) that I was actually very good at and enjoyed doing science. The next year I packed my schedule full of science subjects and I haven't looked back since!

Through science I have had the opportunity to visit Sydney twice (including a trip to the nuclear reactor at Lucas Heights!) and complete three separate vacation research projects. If I have to pinpoint why I love science, it is really because of three things: I enjoy the hands on nature of laboratory work; I have always loved a challenge and I thoroughly enjoy both reading and writing, which I get to do a lot of as a researcher.

My most important influences would have to be all the lecturers and lab demonstrators I've had during my time at university. They managed to communicate a sense of genuine enthusiasm for science and were always prepared to take time out of their busy schedule to offer help and advice.

Last year I completed my Bachelor of Science degree at the University of Tasmania, specialising in both chemistry and physics, and I am currently in the middle of my honours year. Whether I end up doing a PhD project or working in industry, I am very much looking forward to an ongoing career as a scientist.

For more information: www.utas.edu.au/chemistry

www.YoungTassieScientists.com