

# A Day in the Life... of a Talisman Energy Well Engineer

Aged 24 Ewan Abel joined Talisman Energy 10 months ago as a Graduate Well Engineer.

Attending Portlethen Academy in Aberdeen, Ewan achieved 8 Standard Grades before sitting Maths, English, Chemistry, Physics and Geography Highers. At a young age Ewan knew he wanted to go to University so tailored the subjects he studied.

Preferring more physical and practical subjects Ewan considered studying Engineering but did not want to specialise in a particular discipline. In the end he decided upon an MSci in Physics with Photonics at St Andrews University. (Photonics relates to study of lasers and optic fibres.)

At University Ewan still favoured the more practical modules and was still interested in an engineering career. This led him to find work placements for summer breaks.

Ewan grew up around the oil and gas industry and two of his brothers also work in the sector so it seemed a natural place to pursue work placements. Ewan arranged these by visiting industrial estates and delivering his CV to companies.

The first two years he found jobs labouring. During this time he met many people who worked on and offshore and learned about different types of work in the sector.

After third year at University Ewan found that as he had greater academic and industry experience therefore he managed to set up a placement in a technical role in Subsea Engineering, this confirmed his desire to work in engineering.

Graduating with a 2:1 in 1999 Ewan investigated specialised Post-Graduate Training. Applying for a much sought after position on the Heriot Watt University Post Graduate in Petroleum Engineering, Ewan was successful in gaining an interview and secured one of only 40 places on the course.

Some places on the course attract industry sponsorship. In June of 1999 three potential sponsor companies interviewed Ewan and he was fortunate enough to secure one of these. Ewan states, "this helped greatly, making it easier to focus upon studying."

The course lasted 11½ months and was split into two phases. The first phase was lectures on various engineering subjects such as: Drilling, Reservoir, Well and Petroleum Engineering. The second phase involved two projects: an individual industry based project and a Group Project working with others on the course.

During the individual project Ewan was based with his sponsor company and undertook research to analyse the recovery rate of oil and gas from one of their fields. He explains, "this was an excellent experience. I was based in the office using the same methods and contacts as would be used in normal work. I learned a lot from this!"

The group project was a 'field development proposal'. Given seismic survey and exploration well data the group went through the process any company would in calculating how much oil and gas is in a reservoir, where to drill for it, what type of drilling structure to use, etc. The final proposal was written up and presented to Department of Trade and Industry representatives for assessment making it all very realistic.

Many companies asked the university for student's CVs and arranged to meet with the students. Some were lucky enough to secure employment through this contact.



Making speculative applications to contacts made through friends, family and previous work experience, Ewan was invited for an informal meeting at Talisman Energy. Ewan researched the company through their website at [www.talisman-energy.com](http://www.talisman-energy.com). Interviews followed with Human Resources, the Department Head and Lead Engineer.



In November 2000 Ewan started work with Talisman Energy in Aberdeen and a personal training programme was developed. Over a period of four years Ewan will spend time in five different areas of Well Operations:

- *Well Integrity and Management Systems*
- *Production Technology*
- *Production Chemistry*
- *Well Engineering – Platform Operations*
- *Subsea Engineering – Wells*

The focus of training will be based on the job, however formal off-line training will complement this. So far Ewan has completed the placement within Well Integrity and Management Systems and is now working in Platform Operations.

Initially, Ewan attended a course on Well Operations legislation. The company is responsible for ensuring the safety compliance of all work they do, so it is important engineers have knowledge of the legislation. The company develops set policies and procedures for work they do to ensure they comply with safety and environmental legislation at all times.

Ewan's role in this included timetabling and developing procedures for testing of equipment used offshore. He was also involved in developing the measurements for testing - this required making calculations to check equipment was working safely. Ewan also went offshore to oversee the actual tests and ensure the relevant paperwork was completed. Ewan comments, "although learning about legislation can be quite dull it has been a good grounding to understand the company and individuals' responsibilities and the need for sound operating policies and working procedures."

Now training in Platform Operations, Ewan is 'shadowing' the Claymore Installation Well Engineer. (Shadowing means watching and learning and assisting an experienced postholder). This role requires more work offshore. Ewan is enjoying this work and as he builds up experience he undertakes more elements of the work.

While onshore Ewan is involved with planning specific jobs that need to be done offshore. To do this he has to consider safety implications, drilling schedules, manpower requirements, equipment needed for the job, logistics for people and equipment, how long the job will take and costings. Ewan also has to complete relevant paperwork and write a detailed programme for the job explaining step by step what needs to be done.

Skills Ewan considers important in his work are: listening to experienced engineers, problem solving drawing from your knowledge and experience, and the ability to visualise problems and solutions. He acknowledges these skills develop with experience. Other more general skills Ewan highlights are presentation and report writing, teamworking and computer literacy.

Relating work to school Ewan believes it is a good idea to study Maths and English. He thinks other useful subjects are Physics – as it is closely related to engineering - and Technical Studies, which helped highlight that he enjoyed practical work.

**"I enjoy practical work, even when I was younger I always did my own bike and car maintenance. As a result I always wanted to get into work like this. Everything is new and I am always learning, I can't think of any bad points!"**