My placement blog is going to be a bit different to all the others you will read on this page. Firstly, I apologise for the lack of beautiful pictures and exciting stories about doing research in a tropical paradise all summer. My blog is more about what happens if things go a bit wrong.

I seem to have had the worst luck in my MSc year and nearly everything that could have gone wrong, went wrong! However, after all of the setbacks along the way I had managed to organise my dream placement to Oman, booked my flights, almost finished packing my bags and was really excited to go on my summer placement. Then, just under two weeks before I was due to travel I was unexpectedly rushed into hospital where doctors discovered that I had a large cyst which was bleeding into my abdomen. I spent several days in a hospital bed on constant morphine and hoping that I would recover in time to go on my placement. And then the cyst ruptured. I was rushed into emergency surgery at 11.45pm and the next thing I can properly remember was speaking to my doctor the next day. One of the first things I asked her was “will I be able to SCUBA dive in two weeks?” I think the fact that at that point in time I had an oxygen nasal cannula, three IV drips and a yellow stomach from the surgical iodine probably answered my question for me. My doctor told me I should not even fly for 6-8 weeks.

The news that I wouldn’t be allowed to go on my summer placement hit me like a tonne of bricks. Despite my run of bad luck, I hadn’t even considered the possibility of not being able to go on my placement and I was terrified that I would fail my MSc. I had been emailing Julie and Callum throughout my hospital ordeal and they could not have been more supportive. By the time I told them that I wasn’t allowed to go on my placement, they’d already come up with a list of options for me to decide how to proceed and so I decided to do my summer placement from my home, as a desk based project finding and analysing data from various sources to answer the question as to whether trawling for *Nephrops norvegicus* should be allowed in marine protected areas.

Hence I spent the summer of my masters year contacting people from the European Commission, to the Marine Management Organisation, to authors of various papers, in order to collect any data I could to build up an argument as to whether trawling for *Nephrops* was compatible with the goals of MPAs. Despite the slight disappointment that I was not diving on coral reefs, I really enjoyed my placement and learned an enormous amount, not only about the subject itself, but also somewhat about how these various government and non-governmental organisations work.

Alongside doing my research I was also encouraged to get involved in marine related extracurricular activities, as I would have done on my placement and so ended up writing an article about the United Nations Global Goals for an environmental blog, which got retweeted by members of the Swedish government (!) and delivered a presentation about turtles to a group of 60 excitable primary school children, which was unlike anything I had ever done before and I absolutely loved sharing my passions with the kids and getting them engaged with marine conservation.
So, whilst I might be coming out of this year having had four broken bones, a torn hand muscle, a concussion and several new scars, I have also met some amazing people, learned an extraordinary amount and loved (almost) every second!