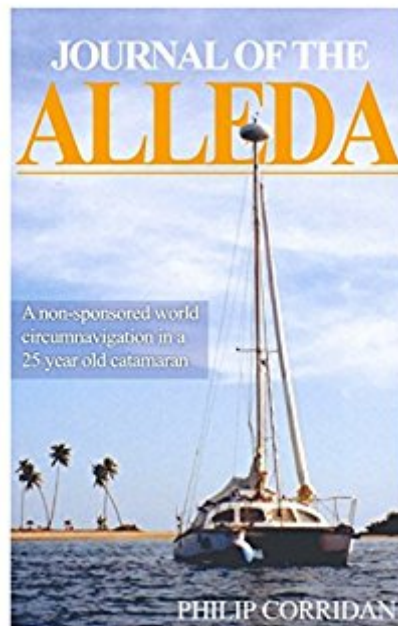




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Journal Of The Alleda



Synopsis

Aged 53 the author set off to sail around the world in his 25 year old 'unsuitable' yacht. If you just want a good read then you won't be disappointed. If you are thinking of long distance sailing then buy! Here are a few snippets from various parts of the bookAn example of British Service humour. A little S of Falmouth a submarine on the surface passed at high speed on a reciprocal course, heading for Plymouth I assumed. An hour later on the radio-telephone I hear "Submarine on my starboard side, this is the German sailing vessel, Storm Vogel". There was no reply. Most warships if they answer at all seem only to respond to being called a warship rather than a specific type. However the German persisted, repeating his call every couple of minutes. After the 4th or 5th attempt he finally got his answer and for a few seconds over the airwaves came a gurgling, sinking noise. I don't know if the submarine's radio operator has a tape recording of appropriate noises for such occasions or whether this time he filled a sink full of water and held the microphone beside it as the plug was pulled, but I do know I was still giggling half an hour later....We crept into Galle harbour, late in the morning of 18 December to waving from Kialoa's crew. About 20 yachts are here and, sure sign of the professional voyagers, we soon had 3 helpers - Ali from Kialoa taking one fore rope to a buoy, Diana from Mr Percival taking a similar aft one and Derek from Makoolis laying an anchor and chain. Good to be back among those who know what is what. I was to find later that most of them had a worse passage than we did....Before I had chance to do more there was a sudden and awful scrunching noise (I still hear it in bad moments). Alleda turned to starboard and stopped, her 50 square metre sail now straining to pull her further onto the reef only too apparent half a metre or less below us looking down I could see a small crack in one rudder while the other was pulled back and looked beyond repair. The end of my dream? Sue's face clearly revealed that her thoughts were the same. My first mistake for which Alleda has suffered. And what of the new keels, will they survive? Such is the inanity of human thought patterns (well, mine) that at this moment I clearly recall seeing a horse on the beach to the north. What brings this clarity - desire to escape the current problem?...At Viviers, five days out of Port St. Louis a large sign claims that here is where the Mediterranean weather ends. Dead right too, it got steadily worse as we climbed up the Rhone valley. It could not have been worse approaching l'Ecluse de Gervans. I knew we were somewhere close to the lock but in poor visibility I could not even see where the lights were located let alone their colour (green to enter, red to stay away, green and red together to prepare to enter). What I could see however was a storm coming and a moment later the wind had increased to 30 knots and we were in hail the size, I will swear, of sugar lumps. We were probably too close to the lock to turn safely away in this wind and swirling current so, despite being unable to look directly

ahead due to the size and speed of the hail, I inched Alleda forward hoping that either the storm would be short-lived or we may find a lee close up to the lock gates. Suddenly in front there seemed to be a cavern. Hallucinating again? Slow seconds passed before I finally believed that the lock had opened for us. I never did see the lights but continued to drive Alleda slowly in, the lock providing the hoped-for lee. The gates shut behind us and the kind esclusier took half a hour to fill the lock when five minutes is the norm. We were safe. The storm was over by the time the lock opened again. About a thousand thanks are due.

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