

MY BOAT - CIRCE

Circe is an Elan 37, bought to replace the redoubtable *Scud*. We had a lot of fun racing *Scud* but I have been corrupted by the cruising lifestyle and was looking for a boat which was a little larger, more modern and with more comfort and stability.



Of course, it still had to be fun to sail, with a reasonable turn of speed if required. I researched the usual main brands of production boats, considered their various merits and narrowed it down to the Elan. I had seen one at Hamilton Island and thought it would fit the bill, provided it sailed as well as *Scud*! I was lucky to track down one moored in the Pittwater which, although four years old, had hardly been sailed and the owner had never bothered to name her! The test sail on the Pittwater was positive, a deal struck and she was trucked over.

Designed by Rob Humphries and built in Slovakia by Elan Yachts, *Circe* is a solid vessel with a moulded inner frame to stiffen the hull. She is very nicely fitted out below with moulded, curved cherry wood giving a light but solid feel below, unlike some of the Ikea style fit outs so common today. The downside of all this is she weighs about six tons which takes off any racing edge. However she handles a heavy sea particularly well, without slamming and with an easy motion. *Circe* came with just two sails and only 100 hours on the engine although the boat was four years old. The spinnaker sheets were still in the sealed plastic bags provided by the builder! The keel draws 2.3 metres and is constructed of lead moulded over a stainless steel frame. The beam of 3.65 metres is carried well aft creating a roomy, comfortable and sheltered cockpit.

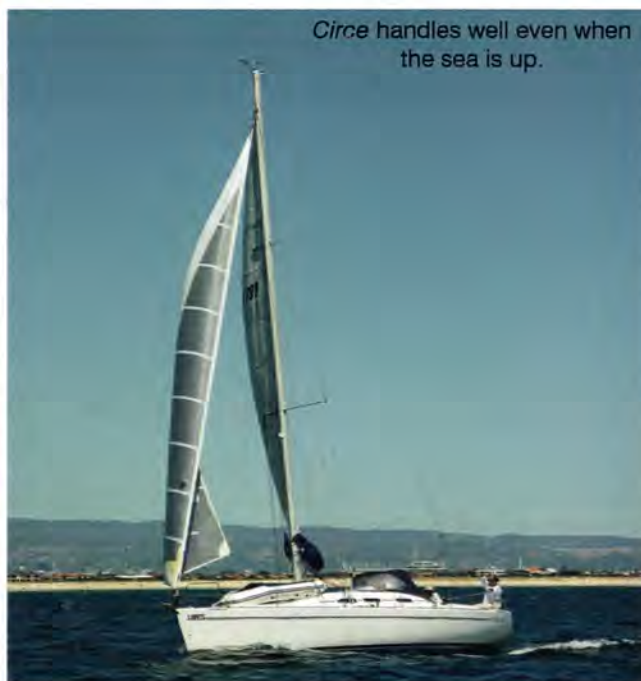
So far Lindy and I have cruised to Kangaroo Island and made a few trips across the Gulf to Pt. Vincent, Black Point

etc. and found *Circe* very comfortable, easy to sail and well appointed. Particularly popular with the crew is the electric anchor winch, right up there with the wheel and sliced bread! We do a little low key racing in twilights, just to keep my hand in. We did have some fun on the Pt Lincoln race of 2011 where we sailed conservatively in the strong winds at the start, watching the hair raising broaches all around. However, we did manage to see 16kts on the log with just a small kite up.

Not all has been plain sailing as I was seduced by the newness of the boat, only to become aware that rubber perishes and wiring corrodes even if the boat is not being used. We discovered a split in a wire-braid covered hose to the hot water just one hour before the start of the Lincoln race. Just a small leak, we'll be right. Not so - 200 litres of fresh water found its way into the bilge, swamping the low slung refrigeration unit! Later, the water pump impeller gave up for the same reason (perished rubber). Fortunately, I had pre-empted this eventuality and had bought a spare. Unfortunately, Don had supplied the wrong part! As the Volvo 30 sail drive is a popular means of propulsion these days, I armed myself with a bottle of red to do the rounds of the West Cape anchorage plastic fanatics. The first Beneteau I approached not only had the exact part - he had two! In the spirit of yachting camaraderie, a price was negotiated and the new impeller soon fitted.

Why *Circe*?

In Greek mythology, *Circe* was a witch and the daughter of the sun god Helios and the ocean nymph Perse (or Perseis). According to legend, *Circe* lived on the island of Aea, where she built herself a palace and practiced spells that enabled her to turn men into animals. How appropriate for sailing. In Homer's



Circe handles well even when the sea is up.



A roomy cockpit

Odyssey, Odysseus (aka Ulysses) sailed by Aea and stopped for a little R&R. Odysseus stayed on the boat while his men went ashore to seek out the local night life. Nothing new in that but *Circe* offered the crew wine and food then turned them all into animals. Surprising that they needed her help! News got to Odysseus so he set off to bail out his crew. (Is this all sounding familiar?) In short, our hero overcame *Circe*, became her lover and, she in turn, change the crew back to humans. (ie: once they slept it off....) They all stayed on the island for a year then, much refreshed and, by all accounts, more handsome than before they met *Circe*, Odysseus and the boys resumed their wanderings with a favourable wind, a gift from *Circe*. Many football clubs are founded on this model and it works for boats as well!

Feel free to come about for a look at *Circe* and a drink - no animals allowed.

Colin Douady