

All photos Nick Day

# Does shoal draught make **A DIFFERENCE?**

Yacht broker **Andy Cunningham** compares two similar sized Hanses – the 371 and 370 – both currently up for sale, to see how different keel configurations affect basic handling characteristics – under sail as well as manoeuvring under power.

**I** was itching to get my hands on *Pero et* – not only because she looks the business and has oodles of accommodation, but also because this particular Hanse 371 has a pivoting centre plate, which is relatively unusual these days.

Peter, her current owner, is a family man torn between

getting his wife and children out on the water and satisfying his competitive streak. You might think that would cause irreconcilable tensions, but, to be fair, by the sound of it, he's managed to do both.

On the one hand he's successfully introduced the kids to sailing, with an emphasis on cruising, creek crawling and

holing up in such delightful Solent backwaters as Bembridge and Shalfleet, while, on the other, he has competed in the Cowes Week regatta for several years on the trot with a team of like minded friends.

Making such successful compromises is far from easy and needs a huge amount of forethought. To that end, Peter

considered just about every aspect of his boat to find the best way of coping with such disparate goals.

Selfishly, perhaps, I was most interested in the boat's performance, so having got her into open water, I tried pushing her to the limit.

First, however, we had to get her off the pontoon.



Left: Casting off the bow line. The stern warps were then released – letting wind and tide ease her out – before the author climbed onboard via the bathing platform (above).

## UNDER POWER

Before slipping the lines, I took time to try and figure out how she might behave. In particular, I was curious about the combination of modern hull form, short stubby keel and ballast blob with a centre plate working through it to increase the draught. How would she sail when hard pressed?

These weren't my immediate concerns though; I was more interested in the twin rudders and propeller stuck between them in a fairly forward position. With no thrust of water over the blades, I would be unable to rely on a swift response when trying to manoeuvre under power.

Following experiences with other wheel steered boats, I've learnt to find out where the rudder centres on the boat. Simply turn the wheel from lock to lock and count the turns.

This pays dividends should you find yourself in a pickle and getting flustered.

This boat went from lock to lock in just two turns. Wow!

We set off at slack water with a slight offshore breeze forward of the beam, which made everything fairly easy; it was simply a matter of dropping the lines and letting the bow drift off. To make things even less of a hassle, Peter has added a bathing platform to the stern, which in situations like this, is a real boon and meant I could hold the stern line to allow the bow to blow off then simply step on at dock level to this convenient rear platform and then get up on board with the minimum of fuss. As boats get bigger and bigger, features like this become increasingly essential in my view.

Having cleared the moored boats ahead and astern of us, I slipped her into gear and she moved ahead. Out in the main stream we tried tight turns to port and starboard. She took two boat lengths to starboard and a boat and a half lengths to port. Not too bad.

We then tried the usual three point turn with helm locked over and endeavoured to use prop

walk. The propeller itself is a three-bladed folder and, indeed, in reverse definitely kicked the stern out to port. However, the boat's response wasn't as crisp or decisive as you'd get with a more conventional, single-ruddered design. In fact, nothing happens until water is flowing over the rudder blades, which means they don't kick in until you're actually moving ahead. That's why she turns less tightly than you might otherwise expect. It's hardly a serious criticism and easy to deal with – just so long as you know about it.

As for the engine, the powerful, 29hp Yanmar diesel is more than capable of getting the

boat up to her hull speed with plenty in reserve.

Reversing was easy and she powered backwards predictably – as if on rails – and responded instantly to the throttle.

The conditions, though far from extreme, meant we had to hold station when we set off at slack water, which required constant bursts of power. All of which was in marked contrast to the positive ferry gliding in neutral we managed to induce on our return against the fast ebbing tide. Not surprisingly, docking was a joy, because water streamed over our rudders and made it easy to steer the boat alongside the pontoon. Under power it was difficult to assess much difference with the blade up or down.

On the whole, the hull configuration caused no concerns and, as with all boats, once you've had a day of circuits and bumps you feel considerably more confident and wouldn't hesitate to poke her bows into the tightest of berths. And, of course, with her shoal draught you



### HANSE 371

LOA	37ft
LWL	32ft 3in
Beam	11ft 8in
Displacement	6.9 tonnes
Ballast	2.28 tonnes
Sail area	897ft <sup>2</sup>
Draught (c/plate up)	4ft 1in
Engine	Yanmar 3YM30
Used Price	£79,000
<a href="http://www.michaelschmidt.co.uk">www.michaelschmidt.co.uk</a>	



1. We start our circuits and bumps with a turn to starboard to assess her turning circle – which wasn't quite as tight as when turning to port.



2. Straightening up, we turned to port. A mild amount of deflection of prop wash from the twin rudders gave minimal wash, but reduced the boat's response.



3. While turning tighter to port, thanks to shoal draft, it was interesting to note the flattened water as the boat's stern slid sideways through the water without the grip of deep foils.

can extend the envelope and get the most from her by wriggling up rivers and shallow creeks, generally going where other, deeper draught boats cannot.

### UNDER SAIL

Peter has two modes of sailing. With the family on board he uses the standard mainsail with single line reefing led back to the cockpit. He also benefits from a stack pack mainsail stowage system that saves even more unnecessary deck work. And to simplify things even further, there's a sensible, self-tacking, high aspect ratio jib. For day

sailing in close confines and busy waterways I'm a great fan of this kind of set up.

When he's in regatta mode, with six or seven gung-ho chums on board, he sets his racing suit of sails supplied by Mike Rellings. This consists of a carbon fibre Revolution main and a carbon fibre full 145 per cent roller reefing genoa. A seriously powerful set of sails.

For this particular trip we were light handed but keen to push the boat to the limits and discover the helm's break-out point and measure any loss of grip – if that were the actual



She looked good and the crew was relaxed, but, at this point she was over-pressed. The boat was clawing to windward with the author making judicious use of the wheel and feathering up in the gusts. Her speed through the water increased considerably as sail was reduced which also reduced the angle of heel.

outcome – so we married the two modes to find out as much as possible as quickly as possible. As the law of sod kicked in, once clear of Calshot Spit the wind piped up and hit 24kn.

In such conditions I would have planned for a reefed main and the self-tacker, knowing that everything would be absolutely fine. However, with full main and big genoa, she heeled dramatically and crawled upwind demanding a great deal of correction to the helm. She felt secure, but over pressed. It wasn't particularly pleasant sailing like that, but with the leeward rudder always biting, she never lost it and we feathered our way to windward of the Bramble Bank.

However, the boat was telling us we weren't doing it right and, because we wanted to sail her properly, we reduced sail to optimise her performance when sailing shorthanded. Some four or five turns on the genoa reefing gear gave us a surprisingly well set headsail, so full marks to Mr Rellings. Next, we applied lots

of backstay, eased the kicker off and eased the mainsheet traveller to leeward. That reduced the pressure on the helm immensely and she took off as she should, loping through the water with graceful ease at quite a tidy lick. We were now sailing her properly and she responded well in the stiff conditions. A race crew would still have been welcome on the rail, but we'd proved our point.

Turning downwind, Peter had hoped to hoist his gennaker and steps were prepared to do so, but it was still relatively early in the season and the wind was heavy and the lines still coiled. The boat also seemed to be providing us with more than enough fun under full white sail alone anyway. Downwind, she tracked easily as long as you kept the boat under the top of the mast. If she showed any tendency to roll and yaw, the secret was to let off the kicker, as well as the mainsheet, and put the helm hard over. We were still carrying far more sail than you would



*Ondina* revelling in the Solent after crossing the Atlantic. She still sports the DuoGen air/water generator on her stern and the bimini framework, which proved extremely useful. She's fast and easy, but also big and comfortable.



for cruising or family sailing and there's no denying that a deep spade rudder would have provided a more instantaneous reaction, but with a deep rudder, I would not have been able to take the boat up to the head of Shalfleet creek. As I say, it's all a matter of compromise.

We sailed back up Southampton Water fast and upright, luffing up to allow the mainsail to plummet down on its mast track cars into its practical stack pack with the minimum of fuss and tidying. The genoa went away too before we took her upriver to her berth.

It was a joy to sail with Peter.



1. We decided to test the tightest of marina trots to demonstrate a prop-walk turn.

He knows his boat and handled her easily. In the turbo mode we tried it would take me a while to get the best from her. In standard mode with self-tacker and the mainsail she was designed for, this boat is a doddle and delivers the kind of fast, easy cruising the builders promise.

Peter has had his youngsters wakeboarding off the back of the boat under sail using the stern platform as a launching pad.

centre plate option on Peter's boat was pricey, because it set him back an additional £10,000, but overall the Hanse 371 is exceptional value.

It should also be noted that the company has now dropped the centre plate version, simply because it's so expensive to build, and prefers to concentrate on its core market.

All in all then, the Hanse 371 has given Peter everything he asked for, but with the children getting bigger and more friends queuing up, he feels he needs something bigger.

### FIN KEEL OR CENTRE PLATE?

Following the sail on *Pero et I* really wanted to compare her with a more standard variation of the same boat.

I was lucky; the Hanse 370 *Ondina* (same hull, newer model) had recently completed a non competitive trans-Atlantic cruise. Having enjoyed the adventure of a lifetime, her owner was being called back to the grindstone by a successful career and new baby.

Not having the time to sail home, he flew back, while *Ondina* followed behind as deck cargo on one of the Seven Star Ships that regularly carry yachts of all sizes, fully rigged, from point to point.

She arrived on 1 June in Southampton, was dropped into the water and immediately sailed to Hamble Point. We sailed her three days later.

The boat was in remarkable condition both above and below decks after 5,500 miles or so on her own bottom and another 3,000 sitting proudly on top of a ship. She boasts the same creature comforts as *Pero et*, but has a lighter wood interior that I found particularly pleasing.



2. There really wasn't much room, was there!



3. But round she went with no problem.



4. Her manoeuvrability was particularly impressive...



5. ...and we were soon heading back out again.

After my experience on the older boat, I was pleased to see the newer model has a step in the transom as standard – other people had reached the same conclusion as I had.

Casting off singlehanded was easy as she drifted clear of a fairly tight berth; the topsides are still of a height that makes boarding nice and straightforward.

So what's the difference? Well, the moderate fin keel gave immediate bite, while the deep spade rudder provided instantaneous directional stability. She reminded me a bit of the Hunter Channel 31, which I still hold in high esteem. Indeed, Hanse has taken over the market segment once served by my beloved British Hunter Boats, though, in reality, I suppose, they start where Hunters stop.

The fin keel 370 was markedly more stable and more

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Andy Cunningham now heads up the Michael Schmidt UK International Yacht Brokerage based at Hamble Point Marina, but for 27 years was Sales Manager at British Hunter.

His first job was with the legendary Peter Haward Yacht Delivery Company immediately after school, but his career has explored just about every part of the industry from helping to develop Brighton Marina, living on board and skippering a 1908 Whitstable Oyster Smack, teaching Yacht Master courses at the National Sailing Centre in Cowes, racing and cruising for his own enjoyment and generally messing about on the water.

To contact him about these or any other brokerage boats he has for sale see [www.michaelschmidt.co.uk](http://www.michaelschmidt.co.uk) or Tel: 023 8045 5714.



Setting out into the Solent, her pace quickly became apparent as she held her own against a bigger Beneteau First. With the sails adjusted she settled into an easy, loping stride. We could see how *Ondina* must have eaten up the passage miles on her transatlantic trip.

responsive under power; her turning circle was tighter too. The single rudder behind the prop meant an instant response. Not only that, judicious use of prop and blade means you can take advantage of prop walk to make the tightest of turns; an obvious advantage over the centre plate version.

Having fulfilled our obligatory circuits and bumps, which gave us reassuring feedback, we set out into Southampton Water in a minimal northerly wind. However, as is often the case, we could see a 180° wind shift approaching and the promise of increased wind from the sea breeze kicking in from the west. Setting



**HANSE 370**

LOA	37ft 7in
LWL	32ft 9in
Beam	12ft 3in
Draught	6ft 4in
Displacement	6.8 tonnes
Ballast	2.28 tonnes
Sail area	941ft²
Engine	Yanmar 3YM30
Used price	£84,950
Details	

[www.michaelschmidt.co.uk](http://www.michaelschmidt.co.uk)

our bow to the south, sails were duly hoisted and before long *Ondina* was revelling in winds of 15-20kn, which averaged out at the higher end, carrying her full main and roller reefing genoa with ease. There was no need to hold the helm, she tracked perfectly on her own, was stiff and stable and easily held her own against fully crewed 40ft Beneteaus as we tacked out towards Beaulieu.

There was no need to go far, because we'd proved the point. Bearing away, *Ondina* shot off down wind at 7.5-8kn under full main and goose-winged genoa. Again minimal attention to the wheel was required. Coming round onto a beam reach was fun and easy.

At no point did she require as much adjustment on the helm as the centre plate version. It really was a most joyful and rewarding sail.

This is a great cruising boat and in fin keel form behaved impeccably. She might not be the traditionalist's idea of the perfect passage maker, but if you want a well made boat that's a pleasure to sail, this one would take a lot of beating.

**Shoal draught sailers**

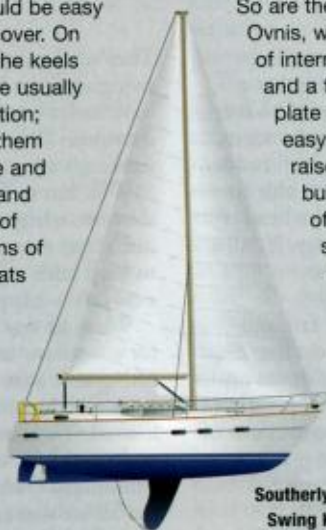
What's the difference between a lifting keel and a centre plate? People are often confused. A centre plate is a piece of pivoting metal designed to reduce leeway, while a lifting keel is a heavy lump of iron or lead that can also be lowered or raised, but which resists the heeling effect of the wind as well as reducing leeway. In the 1980s, lifting keels became increasingly popular, particularly for trailer-sailers. The advantages were obvious. With the keel up, the boat had a flush bottom, which meant she could float in a puddle and would be easy to launch or recover. On the debit side, the keels themselves were usually of constant section; partly to make them easier to handle and accommodate and partly because of cost. For reasons of safety, such boats were designed to be sailed with their keels locked in the down position, so, as a rule, there was no halfway house. If

you wanted a creek-crawler, therefore, you might be better off with a centre plate which could be used as a sounding board and adjusted progressively as you ventured further into the shallows.

Having said all that, the best lift-keelers worked extremely well. The Medina and Delta from Hunter Boats were simple brilliant and are still worth tracking down secondhand. Equally impressive were (and are) the Southerlys, which combined a heavy, hydraulic

controlled swing keel with a sizeable ballast shoe.

So are the alloy-hulled Ovnis, which make use of internal lead ballast and a fairly light centre plate that's relatively easy to lower and raise. More recent builders have offered slightly shallower keels to reduce draught and centre plate for grip, but sadly, even this option now seems to be getting rare.



Southerly 35 Swing Keel