

## YOU'RE NOT SAILORS, ARE YOU?

### Andrew and Janice Fennymore-White

*(Since October 2013 Andrew and Janice have lived and worked aboard their 47ft aluminium Van de Stadt Samoa Destiny, but their journey actually started in 1998... Follow their travels at [www.facebook.com/yachtdestiny](http://www.facebook.com/yachtdestiny). All photos by Andrew and Janice.)*

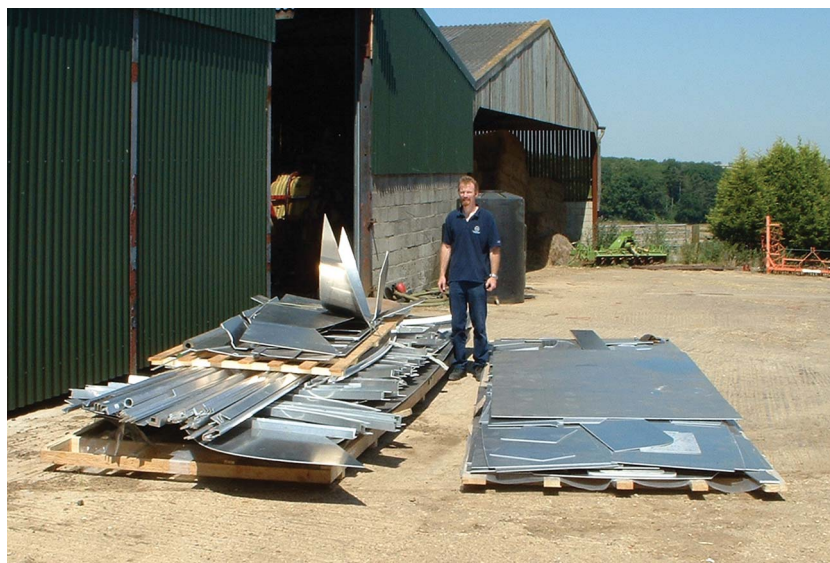
"You're not sailors, are you?" has been said to us many times. We are actually mountaineers and it was through this passion that we got into sailing. A photo in a climbing magazine of a rock wall caught our attention. Our next questions were: 'Where is that? It looks good?' 'Greenland.' 'Oh, how do we get there?' 'We'll need a boat ... we'll need to learn to sail'. In September 1998 we did our Competent Crew in a training yacht on the west coast of Scotland with all weathers, and enjoyed it. A winter of homework, further sailing courses, and in May 1999 we bought our first boat, *Samen*, a Vancouver 32. From Chichester we headed west round Land's End, up the Irish Sea, over to the east coast of Ireland, and then had a great sail all the way to Oban where we left her for the winter.

The next two seasons we collected *Samen* from Kerrera, Oban and sailed the beautiful west coast of Scotland preparing ourselves and the boat for a two month sail/climb expedition to southwest Greenland in July/August 2001. With five crew and two months' supplies *Samen* was well loaded, but she never faltered and throughout our entire trip she looked after us all, even travelling 20 miles in the right direction while hove-to in a force 9 on the return from Greenland to Stornoway. During a change of watch on that return passage, Andy and I sat in the cockpit one night watching dolphins playing in flashes of bioluminescence, with the Milky Way overhead and great sailing in force 5-6 on the beam. 'We could do this as a lifestyle change ... we'd need a bigger boat ... we'll build one'.

An autumn of research and several visits to 'boats for sale' convinced us that we wanted a Van de Stadt 47 Samoa to build in aluminium as Andy was a motorsport

fabricator in this material. Our previous experience meant we already had items we wanted that did not come as standard, so we bought the plans for

***Destiny flat-packed from Holland***





*Turning the hull*

Hull 46 and had Van de Stadt design a lifting keel for her. We had the metal cut and pre-bent in Holland, and in 2003 it was delivered on a pallet to the farmer's barn we rented as a workshop in Helmdon, Northamptonshire – virtually the centre of the UK from the coast.

It took us eight years – four part-time, and four with Andy working full-time on the build and me part-time – to complete *Destiny*. We had a couple of contractors to help with the interior woodwork and exterior painting, otherwise we did everything ourselves. Andy had to re-programme me, previously a secretary, to spray paint and varnish, as well as do plumbing and, more importantly, electrics! I drilled thousands of holes, made tank gaskets and fitted headlining, while Andy did all the welding, grit blasting and priming, equipment research, purchase and fitting. As we wanted to do some charter work we had the boat CE (*Conformité Européenne*) coded as well as getting a Stability Book and MCA (Maritime and Coastguard Agency) coding. October 2013 *Destiny* was launched in Ipswich and our journey started.

Being mountaineers we have always fancied the colder climates, and *Destiny* was built with this in mind. We have 75mm to 100mm of sprayed insulation throughout the boat



*Destiny in a remote Svalbard anchorage*



### *Andy's first Norwegian cod!*

to the waterline, including the forepeak and lazarette. We have no gas on board – previous experience had convinced us that changing gas bottles was always a task: the suppliers were invariably on the outskirts of towns, meaning a long walk with heavy bottles; different countries have different fittings; and when going to Greenland the smallest bottle we could rent had to be strapped to the stern and was finally donated to an Inuit when we left, still  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. We had always planned to live aboard, so built *Destiny* with an 11kw Onan generator and put in a household induction hob with electric combination oven, grill and microwave. This works well.

While charging the batteries we cook, heat water, use an electric towel rail and also, when we have guests with us, heat water for showers. We anticipated over-wintering in the high latitudes for a season, so as part of our build-plan sacrificed water tankage for extra diesel and bought a watermaker.

After launching in October 2013 we sailed along the south coast of the UK, round Land's End, and up the east coast of Ireland to Oban. In summer 2014 we started in the Outer Hebrides, but with no charter clients decided to start our personal journey and headed off to Svalbard for a couple of months, finishing *Destiny's* commissioning period. We couldn't face a winter in Scotland so went to Tromsø in northern Norway and lived aboard on the pontoon in Tromsø harbour.

This was a great experience – the culture and scenery, as well as the Northern Lights and polar darkness (there is twilight from 1000 to 1400 during the middle of winter), plus the fantastic whale-watching and skiing. This proved particularly beneficial to us, with several sail/ski groups joining us. In the summer of 2015 we returned to the west coast of Scotland for a charter season, but the weather that year was particularly wet and windy and proved difficult to market. Whilst in Norway we had had a full cockpit canopy made, which was superb at keeping the snow out, for drying washing, and for keeping the crew and guests dry and warmer whilst whale-watching. We took it down for the return passage to Scotland, but on arrival in Stornaway the forecast





*Orcas and humpbacks feeding off Tromsø (both photos)*

was for three days of gales so we put it back up and it has not been down since. In good weather we can roll the sides and back up, turning it into a bimini.

For the winter of 2015 we decided to return to Tromsø. We had another excellent winter there and the whale-watching (humpbacks and orcas) was awesome from early December until late February. After completing our sail/ski season in Tromsø and Alta, we sailed to Svalbard (Spitsbergen). This time we arrived in early June so that we could experience the end of the winter as well as spring and summer, and watch the fauna and wildlife developments – time is short for breeding, but is assisted by glorious 24 hour daylight. This was our expedition and we did a full circumnavigation of Svalbard including Nordaustlandet and the Sjuøyane (Seven Islands) at 80°5'N, and out to Storøya at 28°E, taking 36 days.

We left Longyearbyen in mid-August last year and sailed to Akureyri on the north coast of Iceland where we spent the winter, but first we took advantage of superb autumn weather and went to Reykjavik for a couple of weeks, stopping in Ísafjörður on the northwest corner to do reconnaissance for our sail/ski season the following spring.





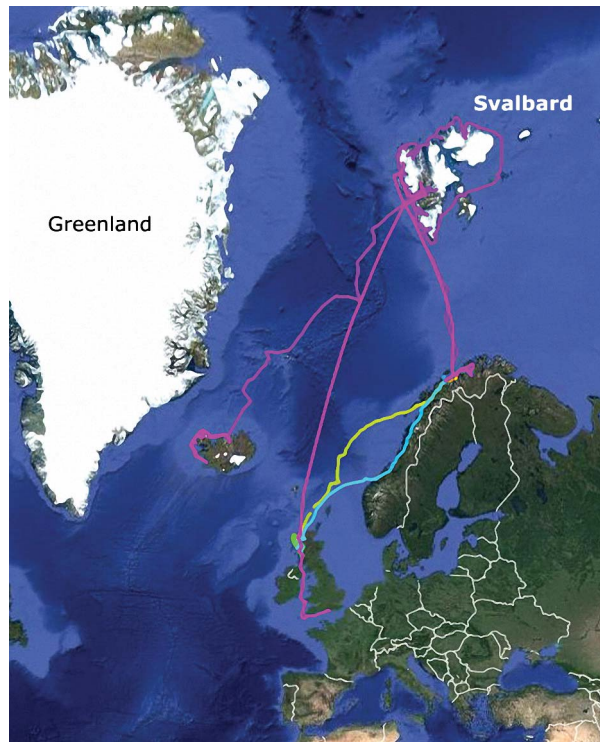
*Destiny's track, 2013 to 2016*  
Stats: 13,838 miles; 10,781 litres of diesel; 1,821 engine hours; 575 generator hours; 43,586 litres of fresh water consumed; 3,553 litres of water desalinated. Millions of smiles, hours of laughter and a few tears

As I write this article in May 2017 we have just finished our sail/ski season and are taking the opportunity to get some last skiing in ourselves before the snow disappears. We will be circumnavigating Iceland from the end of May until early July before returning to Ísafjörður ready for our trip to Greenland, where we plan to over-winter 2017/18 in Nuuk.

We have now sailed over 20,000 miles, 14,000 of them in *Destiny*, and have built a boat that looks after us well and is a comfortable home for ourselves and our guests. We have had to work hard at the sailing, it does not come naturally and we both get seasick on ocean passages. I have learnt to prepare carefully for these, making bottled meals that can be cooked quickly in the microwave, accompanied by couscous

which takes only three minutes using our Quooker hot water tap – the most useful item in the galley. I also make sure there is plenty of cake and savoury muffins, and that the cookie jars (three of them) are full before leaving

*The captain off watch in the pilot berth*



*Summit contemplation  
for Janice in  
Svalbard*



port, especially some with ginger in them. We have also found that music helps overcome seasickness and, particularly on night watches, we both use devices to listen to audio books. *Destiny's* pilot berth is gimballed, and we added an electric blanket so that the bed is warm when the watch changes, ensuring you get a full three hours' sleep instead of coming off watch cold and spending the first hour trying to get warm – important in the Arctic. The electrical draw is minimal.

So we are sailors – professional sailors – now, living and working on the sea to help fund our personal journey. We live aboard all year and *Destiny* is our home. We are still mountaineers – they call to us, be it for climbing, walking or skiing, and the journey we are on is influenced by them. The Arctic has been our home for the last four years and will continue to be so for the foreseeable future.



Let your boat of life be light, packed with only what you need – a homely home and simple pleasures, one or two friends, worth the name, someone to love and someone to love you, a cat, a dog, and a pipe or two, enough to eat and enough to wear, and a little more than enough to drink; for thirst is a dangerous thing.

Jerome K Jerome, *Three Men in a Boat*