

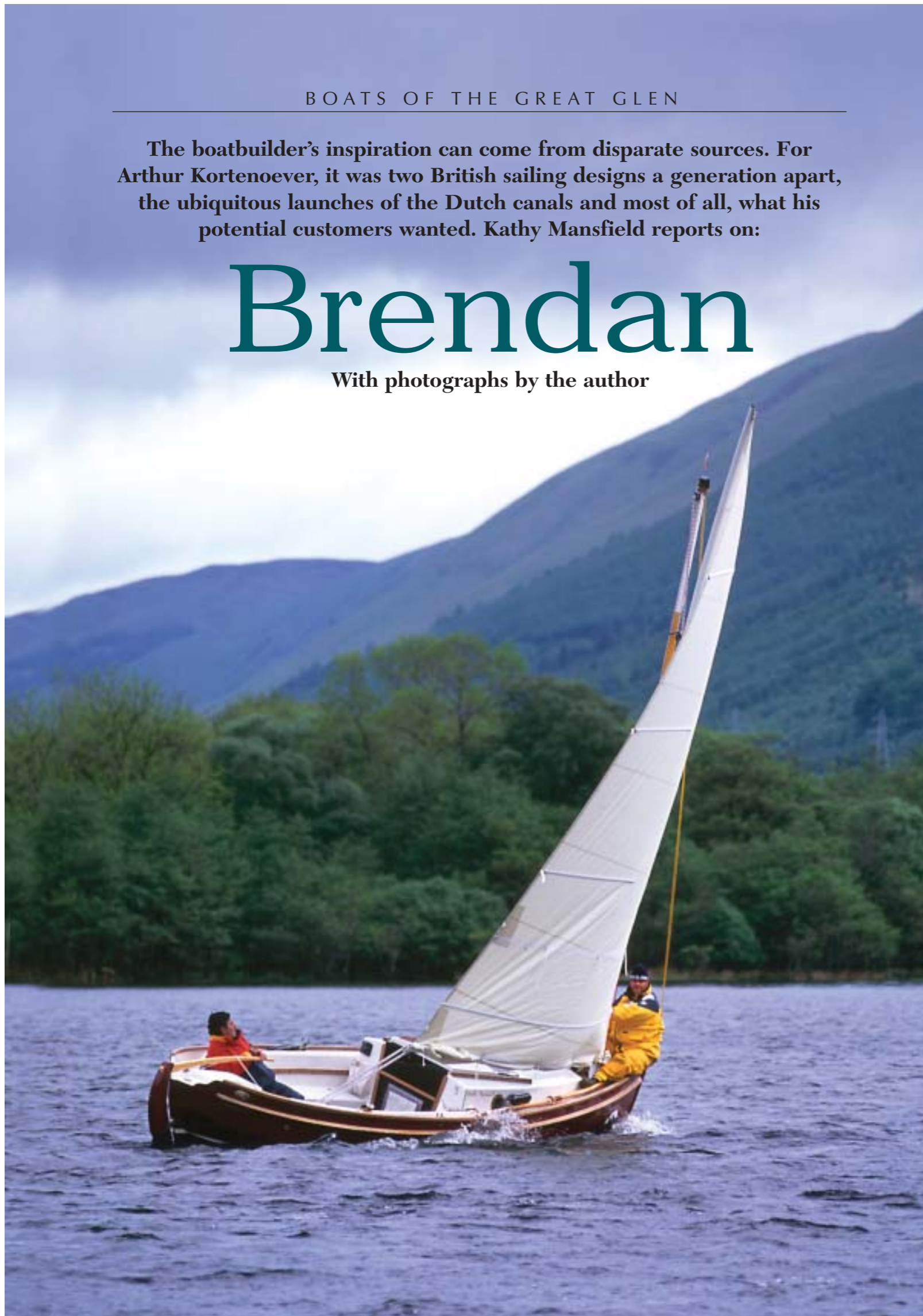
BOATS OF THE GREAT GLEN

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The boatbuilder's inspiration can come from disparate sources. For Arthur Kortenoever, it was two British sailing designs a generation apart, the ubiquitous launches of the Dutch canals and most of all, what his potential customers wanted. Kathy Mansfield reports on:

# Brendan

With photographs by the author



One surefire way of learning some boatbuilding skills is to be shipwrecked and cast upon a desert island with the remains of your old wooden boat. Not too much chance of it happening, you might say but Dutchman Arthur Kortenoever managed it in 1972.

He and his girlfriend spent eight months on a deserted island between Fuerte Ventura and Lanzarote, complete with white sand beaches and a single, quiet, volcano, eating fish and shellfish and selling seashells to the occasional tourist. Company on the island of Lobos consisted of a couple of donkeys and goats, twenty pigeons and an assortment of crabs and lobsters.

He bartered with occasional fishermen – and set to work to rebuild his 1932 26' (8m) Morgan Giles pitchpine cutter which had been driven ashore in an extreme sirocco storm that had caused 35 shipwrecks on a single day. Arthur was sailing home from the Caribbean so he hadn't saved money for ferries or airfares – plus the fact there was plenty of wood on the island from shipwrecked schooners in days gone by, enough to cut into planks and rebuild his boat. And it wasn't a bad place to spend eight months. The sun was glorious, the swimming was good, there was even a mysterious botanical garden to wander in, slowly returning to wilderness behind an aborted attempt at a hotel.

### What does the market want?

When he returned from his desert island, Arthur roamed the world with the various boats he built, then joined friends in Poland and started a boatyard in Gdansk in 1989. They had as much work as they could cope with but managed to build in their spare time a John Watkinson Peterboat. Arthur wanted to build a production boat of his own but very sensibly, he did some careful market research before committing himself to a particular direction – he spoke to boat owners and sailors, magazines and journalists to get an idea of trends and what the market wanted. Too often boatbuilders start at the wrong end, choosing the boat they want and then trying to persuade the market to want it too. That persuasion can be costly and may not work; far better to start with the questions and let the answers determine the type of boat.

In the Netherlands, a type of traditional boat that tends to sell very well is the *sloep*, an open launch, generally clinker-built in a double-ended lifeboat style, that is handy for a run along the magnificent canal network. Arthur identified three boating trends among *sloep* owners. First and most numerous: the customers who enjoy spending a few hours on their boat on summer weekends. Second: the rather more ambitious customers who enjoys cruising on

the canals, perhaps celebrating Queen's Day on 30 April on the Amsterdam canals in company with many other boats at the beginning of the season and exploring further afield on holidays. Third and most ambitious: the customers who achieve the dream of leaving the office well behind, hitching the boat to the car to trail to more distant cruising grounds and sleeping aboard when they get there.

### And sailing too

Also represented in all three groups were customers who get a little bored with marine motoring and would like the option of sailing as well, if they could have an easily stowed and managed rig. This is not straightforward however: the trees and buildings which often border the canals break the flow of wind, calling for a high aspect rig that can catch the wind aloft. This necessitates a tall mast that causes problems for stowage and trailing, not to mention ease of erecting.

Sailmaker Arjen Kooy considered the problem from his experience of making Tornado and Hobie Cat sails. He first studied the Nigel Irens' Romilly rig but adapted that idea to a curved gunter rig. The choice of gunter means that the mast is split into two shorter sections, making all problems of managing a rig easier and the curved gunter yields an optimum sail form very much within the Dutch tradition. His design puts battens, two long and three small ones, exactly where they are needed – giving efficiency without the weight of a fully battened sail. The sail itself is simply attached at the top, so that a track is needed only lower down. Simplicity is the key. There is no foresail needed with this cat yawl style rig and no boom to catch unwary heads. The rig can be easily managed by a single person.

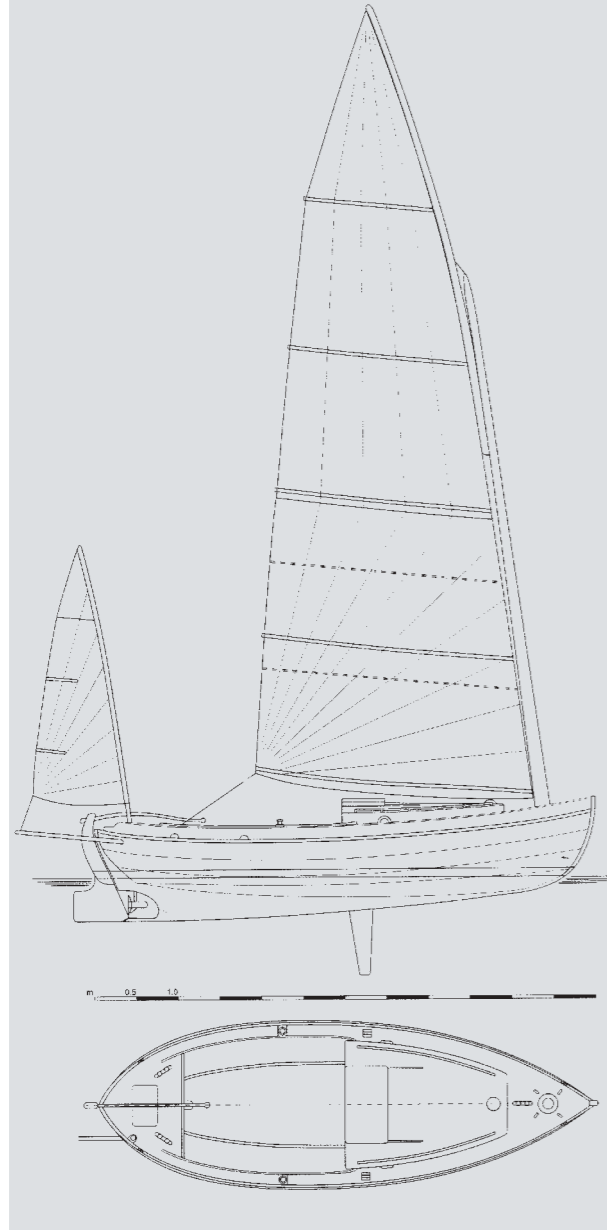
Arthur and his friends were still impressed by John Watkinson's Peterboat and Nigel Iren's Romilly when they came to hull design. Ideas from both craft plus ideas of their own are evident in the final design, which has a catboat body with much of the Romilly's wineglass shape but without a transom. Instead, the boat is double-ended like the Dutch *sloeps* with a chubby stern that loses as little space as possible to avoid cramping the cockpit, while maintaining an easily-driven hull shape. Dimensions were settled at 20'6" LOA with a beam of 6'9" and a board-raised draught of 1'9" (6.24 x 2.06 x 0.53m); overall weight would be 1,653lbs (750 kg) with a GRP hull carrying 205 sq.ft (19 s.m) of sail.

The next step was to build and try out a prototype with different combinations of engine and sailing rig. Production costs are much cheaper in Poland and development proceeded there, though all boats are now built in Holland where Arthur is based. Eventually, four main moulds were made, one each for the hull, deck, cabin ceiling and cabin sole – there are 15 moulds altogether – designed to incorporate tanks for water ballast to keep weight to the minimum, so the boat could be trailed behind an ordinary car.



### Brendan Specification

LOA: 20'6" (6.24m)  
Beam: 6'9" (2.06m)  
Draught  
c/b raised: 1'9" (0.53m)  
c/b lowered: 3'10" (1.18m)  
Weight: 1,653 lbs (750 kg)  
Sail area: 205 sq.ft (19 s.m)



The GRP hull is produced in a choice of colours: cream, red, blue, green or black. The mast is aluminium. Fittings are often traditionally styled with details in teak, and the cockpit flooring is red cedar; all wood is from managed plantations. The cabin hatch has been designed wide, both for ease of use and as an ideal location for a solar panel to recharge the batteries. The centreboard is a standard wing shape, tapered towards the stern, to give good performance.

The name Brendan, chosen after the venturesome Irish monk of the 6th century, has now become the generic for various options on the original design. All the Brendans have three flotation chambers to comply with CE Category C regulations: one in the bow and two at the stern. Storage is good, with two lidded compartments in the cockpit

under the seats, a couple of open pockets and a large covered hatch in the stern. On all boats, auxiliary propulsion is up to the customer: installations can be diesel or electric or an outboard can be used in the well provided. A bowthruster is an option for ease of manoeuvring. A cabin with sitting headroom gives shelter from the weather and mattresses supplied give the possibility of two adults sleeping on board at the weekends, or more if the optional fitted cockpit tent is used. The cockpit benches contain drawers that can be set up to provide a galley. The simplicity keeps down the costs.

Since the first production boat, a keel version has been developed, with more volume at the turn of the bilge and a narrow, long keel which retains the same amount of ballast but without the centreboard. Hull depth remains the same. A gennaker has also been added to enhance sailing performance.

Designs have been also been prepared for a 26' (8m) boat in the same style as the original Brendan with a large open cockpit, shallow draught and ballasted centreboard. A fully fitted cabin will sleep four and incorporate a galley and heads. This version will be heavier, of course but will still be trailable.

### Sailing in Scotland

A long way from the Dutch canals, I sailed the Brendan at the 2001 Great Glen Raid, when she was put to the test by the unforgiving waters of Loch Linnhe, the Moray Firth and the full extent of the Caledonian Canal. She performed well, though her owner had taken the precaution of adding a very large amount of additional lead ballast which she didn't need. Even so, she showed she could handle well and was light on the helm, her clean lines an obvious asset and her tacking neat and dependable.

The cockpit was spacious enough for six people and I liked the simple layout with the nicely styled traditional detailing. The cabin roof blends in neatly with her lines and the temptation to go for space instead of looks has been avoided; this is a sailing boat, not a caravan and a good looking one. The curved gunter rig was indeed simple to handle and efficient. It's high aspect came in handy along some tree-lined parts of the Caledonian Canal but was less important than the option of reefing fast when it came on to blow. She managed well on both counts.

Like the *sloops*, she is also a motor launch, of course and though it is difficult to have the best of both worlds, this is a good compromise. The Brendan could be an ideal family boat, especially for exploring creeks, rivers and lakes in comfort. As a motor boat, she will be at home in estuary and canal. North Quay Marine in Kent has been appointed UK dealers, in conjunction with Character Boats in Lancashire which will look after northern England and Scotland. Priced at £16,045 inc VAT for the catboat version, without engine or trailer, I can see the Brendan fitting that gap in the market which Arthur Kortenoever identified.

### CONTACTS

Cabra Yachting, Postbus 93, 3890 AB Zeewolde, The Netherlands. Tel: +31 (0)36 5221331 Fax: +31 (0)36 5221266 email: info@cabra.nl www.cabra.nl

North Quay Marine: +44 (0)1795 521711

Character Boats: +44 (0)1253 727004