



BOLGER BRICK "TETARD"

A first boatbuilding project
by Matthew William Long

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Introduction

What, who, why & how

A Bolger Brick is a small, homebuilt sailboat of extremely angular proportions--"boxy" would not be unkind. Phil Bolger, who designed this craft, named his creation "Brick," hence it is a Bolger Brick. This particular Brick that I built was named "Tetard," meaning tadpole in French, by my wife, who is French. We hope that this little tadpole of a boat will lead to larger frogs in the future, and that's not a joke about the French!

Philip C. Bolger of Gloucester, Massachusetts is the prolific and now quite distinguished bad boy of boat designers. During a career spanning over 50 years, he has designed everything from dinghies to cargo ships. While quite capable of traditional designs, such as the replica of the 18th century British frigate "H.M.S. Rose," he is best known for simple, functional craft which have made him the guru of amateur boatbuilders worldwide.

This article is a slightly revised version of my first web page completed back in 1999, updated and reformatted as a .pdf file. In these pages I tried to put down on paper my thoughts in the spring of 1999 as I looked back on my first homebuilt boat project. I have included notes on the design, the building experience, and a few photos. "Tetard" first took to the water at Hopkinton Reservoir in Hopkinton, Massachusetts on Labor Day,

September 7, 1998. I no longer own the boat, having moved overseas, but last I heard little "Tetard" was still doing yeoman service as a weekend sailing dinghy.

This article is dedicated to Phil Bolger, "Dynamite" Payson, Jim Michalak, Bernie Wolfard, the rec.boats.building gang, and all those near and far who encouraged me in my project. Special thanks go to my parents for letting me take over their garage for the summer of 1998, and for the gift of the sail, which I suspect was also intended to get me out of their garage.

Of course, I also have to thank my favorite crew member, my wife Agnès, for all her support. Somewhere I have a photo of her, underneath overturned hull of "Tetard," shining a flashlight through the gaps in the chine so I can whack in a few more nails. Now that's love!

Be sure to follow the link below for more boatbuilding info and resources.



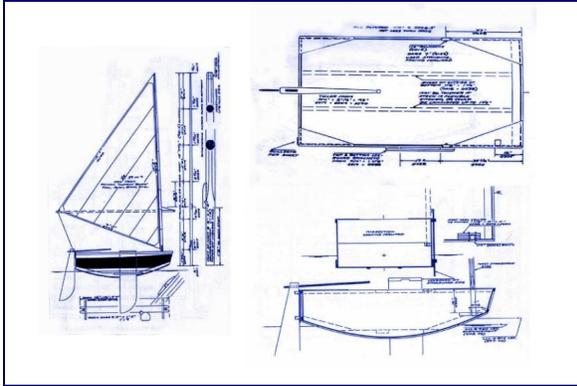
Great lines, nice color, and the boat's not bad, either!

Enjoy,

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Brick plans © Phil Bolger & Friends, Inc.
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Design

Why is it so square?

People are often surprised that such a renowned designer as Phil Bolger would design such a simple and frankly funny-looking boat as Brick. Bolger himself had this to say about Tortoise, Brick's equally-square little sister, in Harold H. "Dynamite" Payson's book *Build the New Instant Boats*:

It would have made a cat laugh to watch me designing this wee boat, because I kept trying to get more curves into it. Every curve made her more expensive, or bulkier, or took away capacity, so I ended up with the straight lines as the only way to do it.

I called Tortoise "Sandbox" at first. I changed the name when I found she deserved more respect than I had expected.

Brick uses a lee-centerboard through brackets on the starboard side, an outboard rudder, and an off-center, unstayed mast. The result is a completely open hull, 4' x 8', with unparalleled lounging space for such a small boat. We only ever sailed ours with two aboard, but Phil says it can handle "four men and a big, frightened dog," and I believe him. [The current owner of "Tetard" reports sailing himself and four young boys without a hitch!

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The rig is a sprit-boomed (the boom crosses the sail) leg-of-mutton (triangular sail), laced to the mast with individual ties, and simply lashed in place. This makes it very easy to brail up the sail for a short stay, or to simply spool the sail on the mast for storage.

Bolger freely admits that the high-sided, seatless Brick makes a lousy rowboat. So bad, in fact, that I stopped carrying oars and even removed the oarlocks from "Tetard." Some owners have had better luck with a folding stool as a rowing seat. With my folding rudder in the up position, I found that I could make enough headway by sculling it back and forth to maneuver those last few yards to the dock. There is always the leeboard for an emergency paddle.

Brick has been called "the best possible use for three pieces of plywood," and I couldn't agree more. To read more about the design of Brick, see Phil's book *Boats with an Open Mind*.

Building

Can I build a Brick?

Yes, you can! Unfortunately, I didn't keep any kind of log or take many photos during the building of my Brick. I began back in the fall of 1997 in a woodworking class--Rebecca, the instructor, kindly tolerated the boatbuilding eccentric--but I didn't get much done there.



Drifting in light air with room for at least two more crew.



Working out the details of the rig on my parents' front lawn. Both of Payson's books are close at hand on the grass.

Setting up, cleaning up, and waiting for tools took up much of my time. The large bench tools were more trouble than they were worth for large sheets of plywood. I later learned to move the tools, both power and manual, with the parts stationary on a sawhorse.

Speaking of tools, I found a handheld drill, circular saw, and sabre saw to be the most useful power tools. Other than that, you'll need a few hand planes and scrapers and all the clamps you can get! I wouldn't bother with a table saw--a ripping guide on a circular saw works well, and do a lot more besides.

I really built "Tetard" over summer vacation 1997, as I was a teacher back then. Almost everything I know about building boats I learned from Dynamite Payson's books *Instant Boats* and *Build the New Instant Boats*, Jim Michalak's online newsletter, and the great magazine *Messing About in Boats*. The rest was just learn-by-doing, sometimes making bonehead mistakes, like nailing a transom frame too close to the edge of the plywood before beveling it. I had to push the nails back out with a punch, tearing up the plywood, to avoid the saw-meets-nails-machine-gun effect. Luckily, Bondo and paint cover all! I also highly recommend using very thin (1/4" or less) laminations of perfectly clear wood to make the bottom skids. Mine were made of 1/2" spruce left over from the spars, and they broke in several places each. I fastened all the pieces down with drywall screws, filled the gaps with Bondo, and encapsulated the the

skids with fiberglass tape and resin. Again, hooray for Bondo!

As my first boat, this was a learning experience, so I kept the materials cheap: luan plywood, pine lumber (spruce for the spars), Weldwood plastic resin glue, fiberglass tape, polyester resin, and the aforementioned Bondo. I did spring for silicon bronze nails and fittings from Jamestown Distributors and a genuine Bohndell sail from "Dynamite" Payson. Paint was Ace Hardware latex enamel glossy exterior paint over oil-based primer for latex paint. My paint job came out awful because I tried to hurry it with thick coats. You can't see the runs in the photos, thank goodness!

The only modification which I made to the boat was a folding rudder which I cobbled together after the first one broke, ending our VERY WINDY first day's sailing. I used some scrap plywood for the fixed portion, and salvaged the broken original to make a folding blade. Agnès and I found it very hard to launch the boat off the beach with the original one, since it required waist-deep water to put in. The new one drew little more than the hull, and allowed steerage way until we got going. It was held in place with a bolt and a wing nut--just reach down and adjust the friction. The lee-centerboard sits in the guides with a pin through the gunwale and board and into the guide. Pull the pin and down it goes!



Plenty of space for an 8' boat.

Photos

To see these or any other images in this document in more detail, use the Adobe Acrobat Reader zoom tool (magnifying glass) to enlarge the image.



Conclusion

Easier than an airplane

Looking back, I am very glad to have built a Brick as my first project. I don't think that this type of square boat is really much easier than something a little more "boat-like," say Teal or Elegant Punt, to name a few. But it's boxy shape seems easier and, in my case at least, that impression helped me to actually get started building.

To paraphrase Henri Mignet, French homebuilt aircraft pioneer, "If you can nail together a packing crate, you can build a Brick."

So why wait?

♀WLNMOLE



"Tetard" ready for the next adventure.