

# The Case for an Aft Placement of the Chart Table in *Titanic's* Chart Room

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## Introduction

There is a debate which has been ongoing for several years within the greater *Titanic* community regarding the placement of the chart table in *Titanic's* chart room. The debate is between those who hold two positions. One group believes that the chart table is placed against the forward bulkhead of the chart room. The other group believes that the chart table was placed against the aft bulkhead of the chart room. The purpose of this article will be to make the case that the chart table was more likely placed against the aft bulkhead. This may seem to be a trivial matter and it probably is. What may be instructive in this matter is how evidence is evaluated. This evaluation of evidence will look at what evidence should be given greater weight. The other reason this article is being written is to create a more permanent record of this controversy.

## *Titanic's* Chart Room

The most definitive evidence we have for the general layout and location of *Titanic's* chart room is found on the general arrangement plans which were provided for the Limitation of Liability hearings after the *Titanic* disaster. Figure 1 shows the chart room outlined in red.

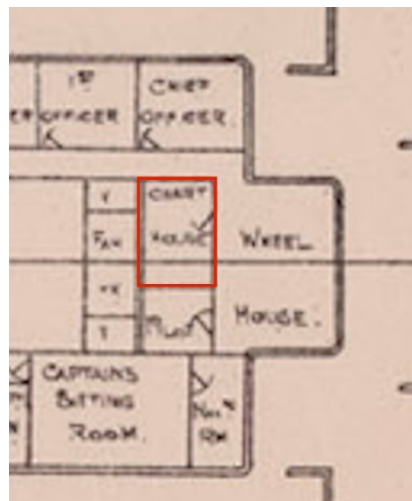


Figure 1

Chart room (in red) from *Titanic* Limitation of Liability plans

The plan shows the chart room located primarily to the port side of the fore and aft midline. There is an entry door on the forward bulkhead of the chart room. There is no other access to the chart room shown on the plans. There is no indication of furniture in the chart room on the plan. Additionally, there is no indication of any windows for the chart room, however it appears that furniture and windows for interior rooms were not a part of the plan. This plan is our closest link to the layout of *Titanic*. The plan is not without error but there are no other plans of *Titanic* which show this area in detail.

## The Evidence for a Forward Placement of the Chart Table

There are two primary pieces of evidence which have been offered for the forward placement of the chart table. The first is a drawing of the bridge of an unidentified ocean liner. This drawing is shown in Figure 2.



Figure 2

### Drawing of a generic ocean liner's bridge and chartroom layout

In the drawing, the chart table is against the forward bulkhead of the chart room. It is able to be placed against the forward bulkhead because there are also windows on the forward bulkhead of the chart room.

The second piece of evidence which has been offered is what is said to be cutaway drawing of RMS *Britannic's* chart room shown (outlined in red) in Figure 3.

Go to next page

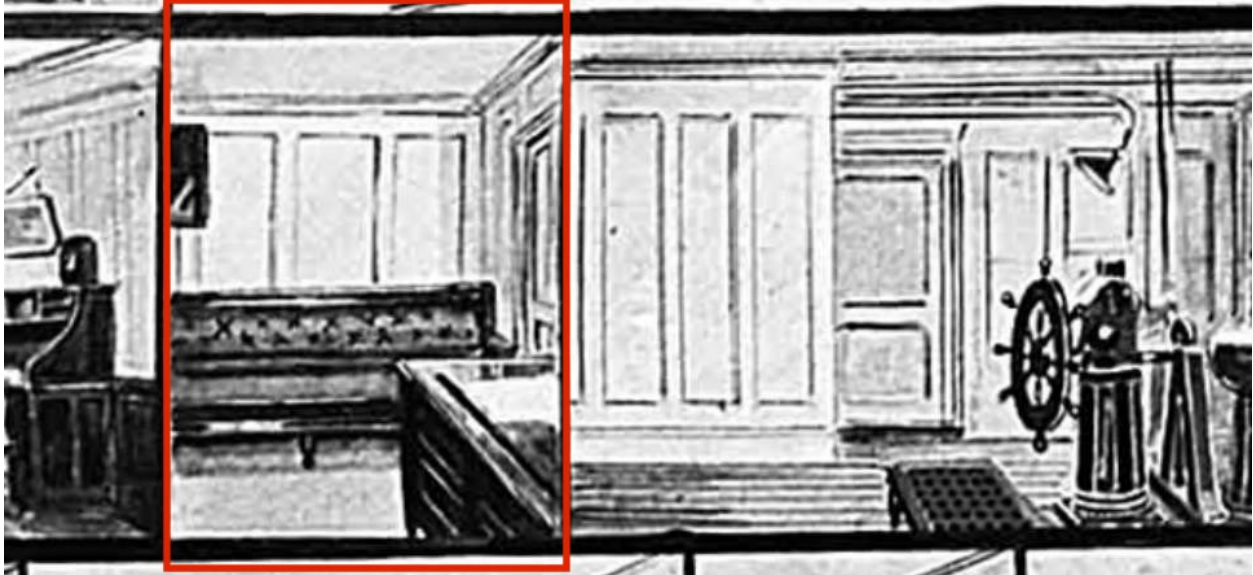


Figure 3

Cutaway drawing of *Britannic* with purported chart room (outlined in red)

The other items of evidence offered are a number of photos of ships other than *Titanic* which have chart tables on the forward bulkhead of their chart rooms. One example is shown in Figure 4.



Figure 4

Example of a ship with a chart table on the forward bulkhead of the chart room

## The Evidence for the Aft Placement of the Chart Table

All of the evidence for the aft placement of the chart table will be direct *Titanic* evidence. Like the evidence presented in the case for the forward placement of the chart table, the *Titanic* evidence will be circumstantial.

The first piece of evidence is the presence of windows on the aft bulkhead of *Titanic's* chart room. The location of these windows is shown in Figure 5.

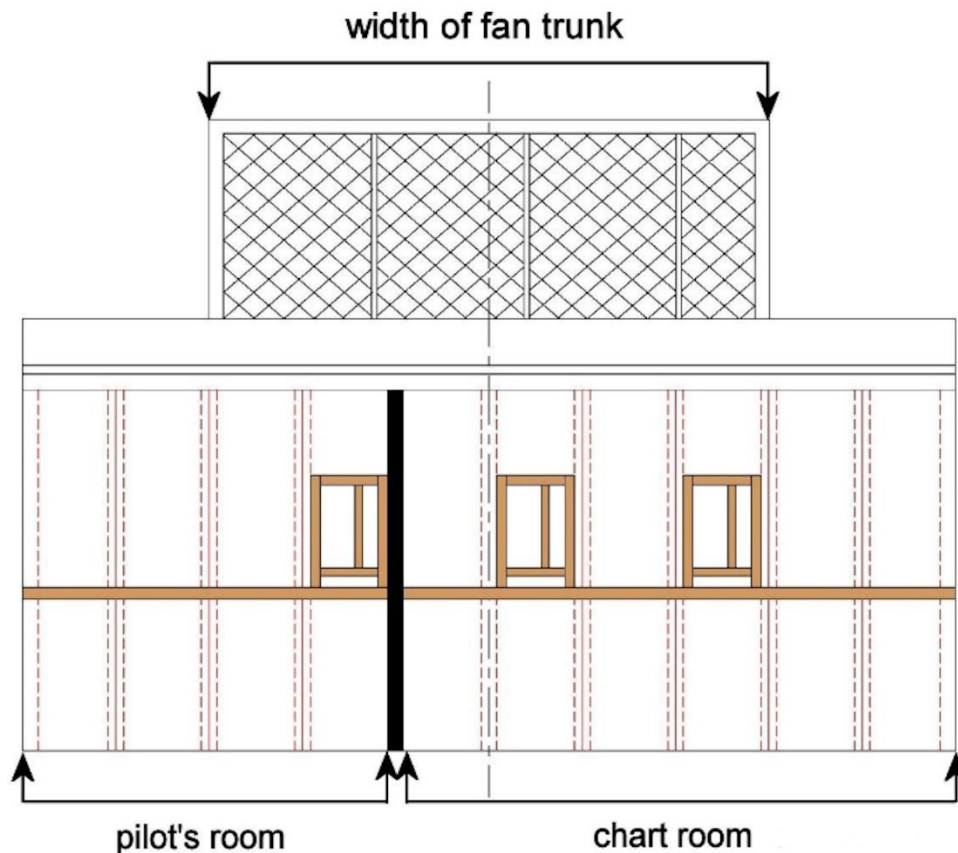


Figure 5

### Location of windows on aft bulkhead of *Titanic's* chart room

These windows provided indirect light from the stokehold fan trunk to the chart room. Additionally, they provided air ventilation since they could be raised slightly. A more complete explanation of these windows can be found in this article: [Titanic's Chart Room and Pilot's Room Windows](#).

The next piece of evidence is that centered over the aft half of the chart room was a prismatic skylight overhead in the room. This prismatic skylight provided direct natural light to the room in addition to the indirect light transmitted through the aforementioned windows on the aft

bulkhead of the chart room. The location of the prismatic skylight over the chart room is shown in Figure 6.

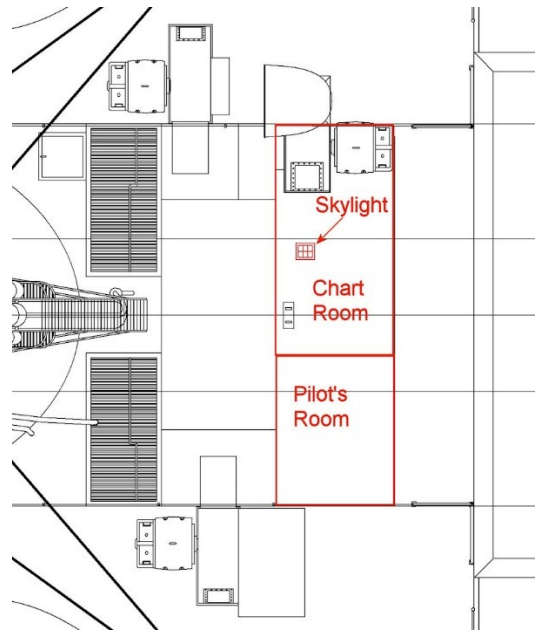


Figure 6

Location of prismatic skylight over *Titanic's* chart room

Verification of this prismatic skylight on *Titanic's* wreck is shown in Figure 7



Figure 7

Photo of location of prismatic skylight over chart room on *Titanic's* wreck

## Evaluating the Evidence

The first step in evaluating the evidence is to see if some evidence carries greater weight than other evidence. In creating a hierarchy of the value of evidence, the evidence which carries greater weight is that which is *Titanic* evidence since we are trying to answer questions specific to *Titanic*. The evidence of the windows on the aft bulkhead of the chart room and the overhead prismatic skylight are both documented by *Titanic* photos.

The arguments used to support a chart table against the forward bulkhead of the chart room have no *Titanic* evidence to support them. When making the case for a forward bulkhead location of the chart table, one can criticize the value of the *Titanic* evidence and the conclusions drawn from it but what one can't do is substitute evidence from other ships and contend that it carries greater weight than evidence derived directly from *Titanic*.

### Objections to an Aft Bulkhead Placement of the Chart Table

One of the objections to the aft placement of the chart table is the assertion that the two windows into the fan trunk wouldn't have provided sufficient light. That may have found to be true after they were installed which is why a prismatic skylight was added over the aft half of the chart room to supplement the light from the two windows.

Another objection is that since *Titanic* was within the era of electric lighting aboard ships, no natural light would have to be provided to the chart room. The same could have been said for the inboard, forward A deck cabins which did not have natural light. However, they provided indirect natural light to them by means of skid lights on the boat deck. *Titanic* was built during a time of transition when new solutions to problems were being tested. While testing these new solutions, they did not completely abandon the old. A prime example is communication between the docking bridge and the navigating bridge. At the time of *Titanic*, they kept a system of quadruple redundancy in the form of docking flags, docking lamps, telegraphs, and telephone communication.

Another objection is that the majority of period ship photos show a placement of chart tables against the forward bulkhead of the chart room. This is an argument that would hold water if we had no *Titanic* evidence for the provision of natural light to the chart room. As it is, this is simply another argument which seeks to nullify *Titanic* evidence by using inferior non-*Titanic* evidence.

Finally, in order to justify a forward chart table, its proponents invent at least one window in the forward bulkhead of the chart room with no *Titanic* evidence. Curiously a proposed window in the forward chart room bulkhead would justify the forward placement of a forward chart table while the *actual* presence of windows in *Titanic's* aft chart room bulkhead does not justify an aft placement of the chart table according to the forward table proponents.

## Evaluation of Evidence for the Aft Placement of the Chart Table

The primary evidence for the aft placement of the chart table is the provision of natural light for the chart room. Figure 8 is a plan view of the chart room showing the location of the windows and the location of the overhead prismatic skylight.

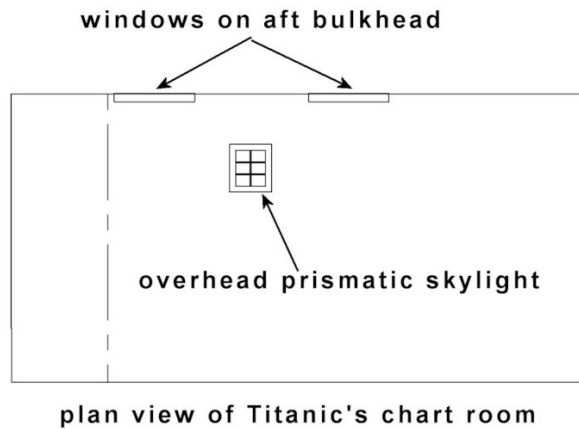


Figure 8

Plan view of chart room

Figure 9 is an elevation view of the aft bulkhead of the chart room showing the location of the windows and the overhead prismatic skylight.

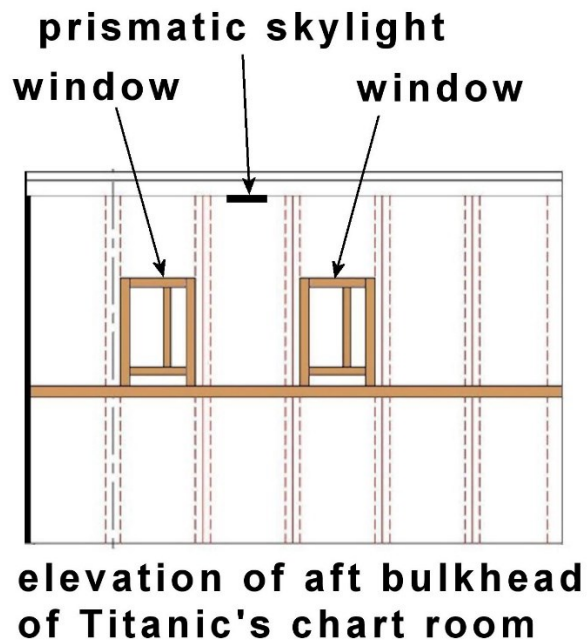


Figure 9

Elevation view of chart room

It can be seen that this arrangement would have the greatest concentration of natural light near the aft bulkhead of the chart room.

The conclusion that the chart table was meant to be located against the aft bulkhead of *Titanic's* chart room is based on following the actual *Titanic* evidence to its logical conclusion without inventing alternate evidence.

### Conclusion

This article has examined evidence for the placement of *Titanic's* chart room table against both the forward and aft chart room bulkheads. I believe that the *Titanic* evidence clearly shows that the circumstantial *Titanic* evidence of the provision of both direct and indirect natural light to the chart room and their locations should lead one to the logical conclusion that it was the intent of the shipbuilder that the chart room table would be located against the aft bulkhead of the chart room.