

The Case Against a Waterway against the Aft Bulkhead of *Titanic's* Forward Well Deck

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Introduction

Since the case for a waterway on the aft bulkhead of *Titanic's* forward well deck has been made within the last few years, this article will make the case **against** the presence of such a waterway.

Evidence

The case for the presence of a waterway in the location previously described is based primarily on evidence from an early *Olympic* General Arrangement (G/A) plan of the forward well deck. This rather simple plan is shown in Figure 1.

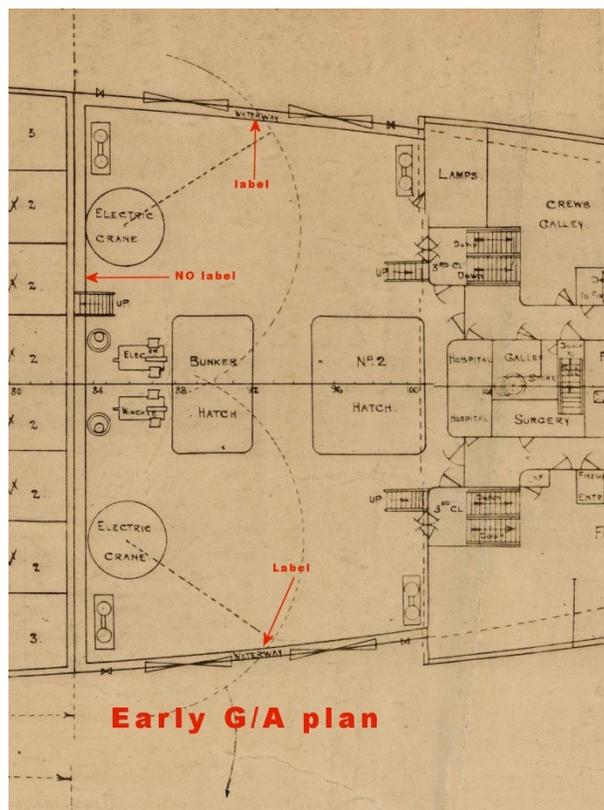


Figure 1

Early *Olympic* G/A plan of the forward well deck

One of the easiest ways to tell that this is an early plan and does not represent the final configuration is the presence of low roller fairleads aft of the electric winches and the absence of pillar roller fairleads between cargo hatches #2 and #3. The proponents for the presence of an aft waterway point to the lack of any separation on the plan between the port and starboard (P & S) waterways and what they believe is the aft waterway. It is interesting to note on this plan that the P & S waterways are labeled but the supposed aft waterway is not. One wonders why the proponents of this aft waterway stopped with this plan as their evidence and did not find or use the plan which is of the ship "as built". Figure 2 shows the G/A Plan of *Olympic* and *Titanic* "as built".

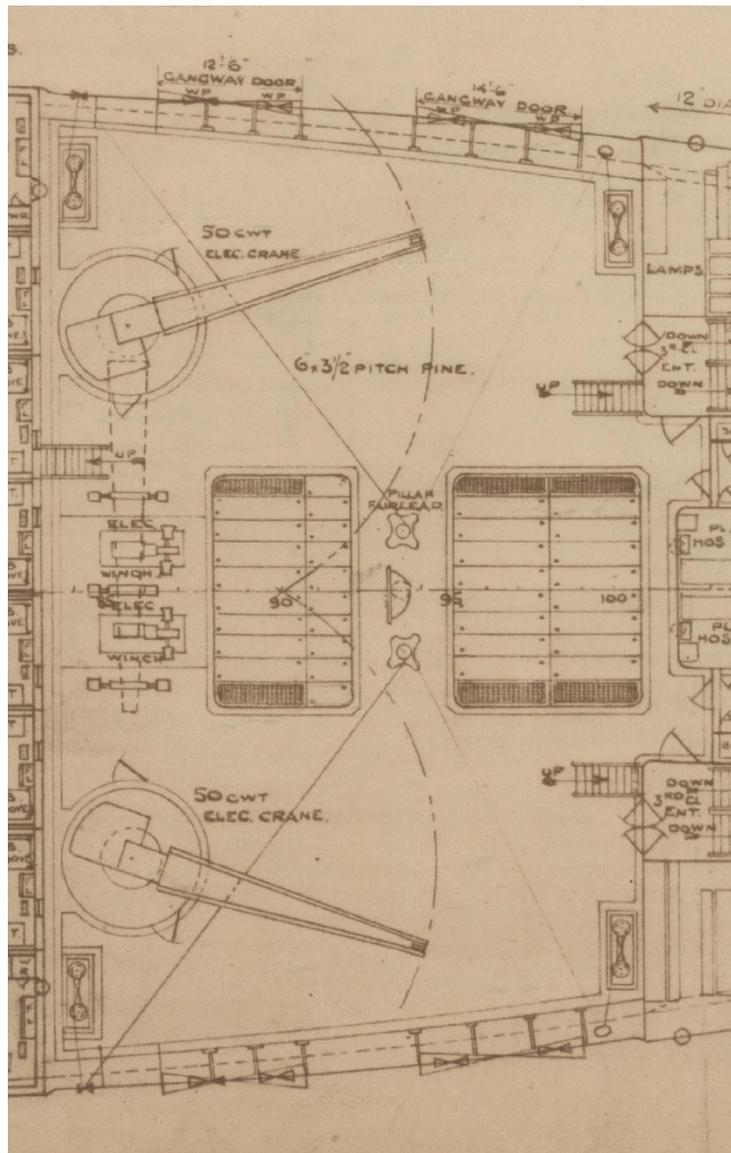


Figure 2

G/A plan of *Olympic* and *Titanic* "as built"

The only minor difference in the configuration shown on the plan is the head of the ventilator between hatches #2 and #3. The plan shows a cowl but it was a French head. Figure 3 shows the P & S waterways indicated in blue and margin planks indicated in red.

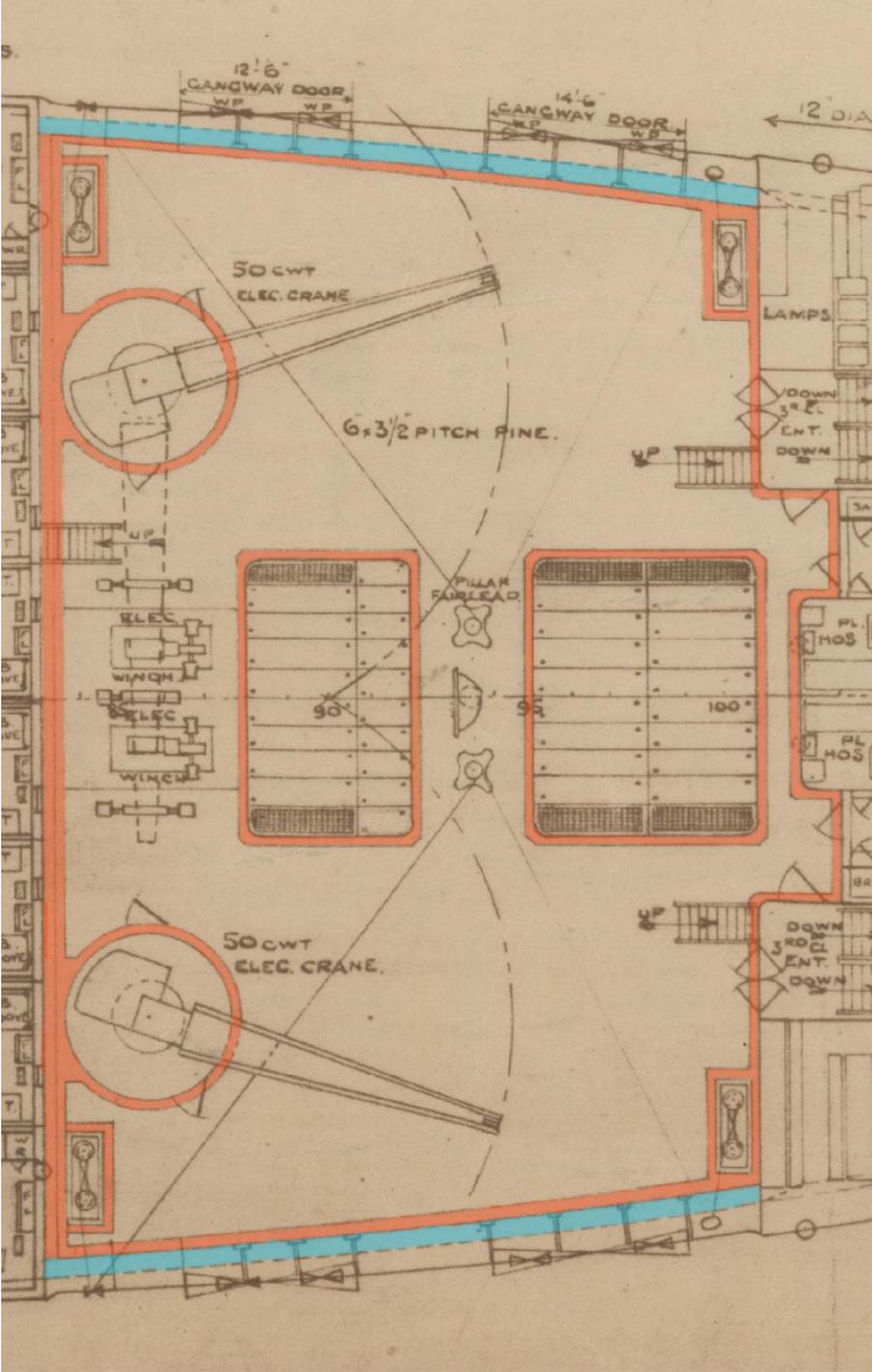


Figure 3

Colored version of Figure 2 with waterways blue and margin planks red

In this plan the aft margin planks are indicated as being in two pieces. This not unusual for such a wide area that requires margin plank coverage.

Some may object and contend the aftmost margin plan was, in fact, a waterway. Figure 4 shows that if this were a waterway there would be no lines of division between the aft area and the P & S waterway. However, Figure 4 actually shows that the inboard edge of the P & S waterways extends all the way to the aft bulkhead of the forward well deck.

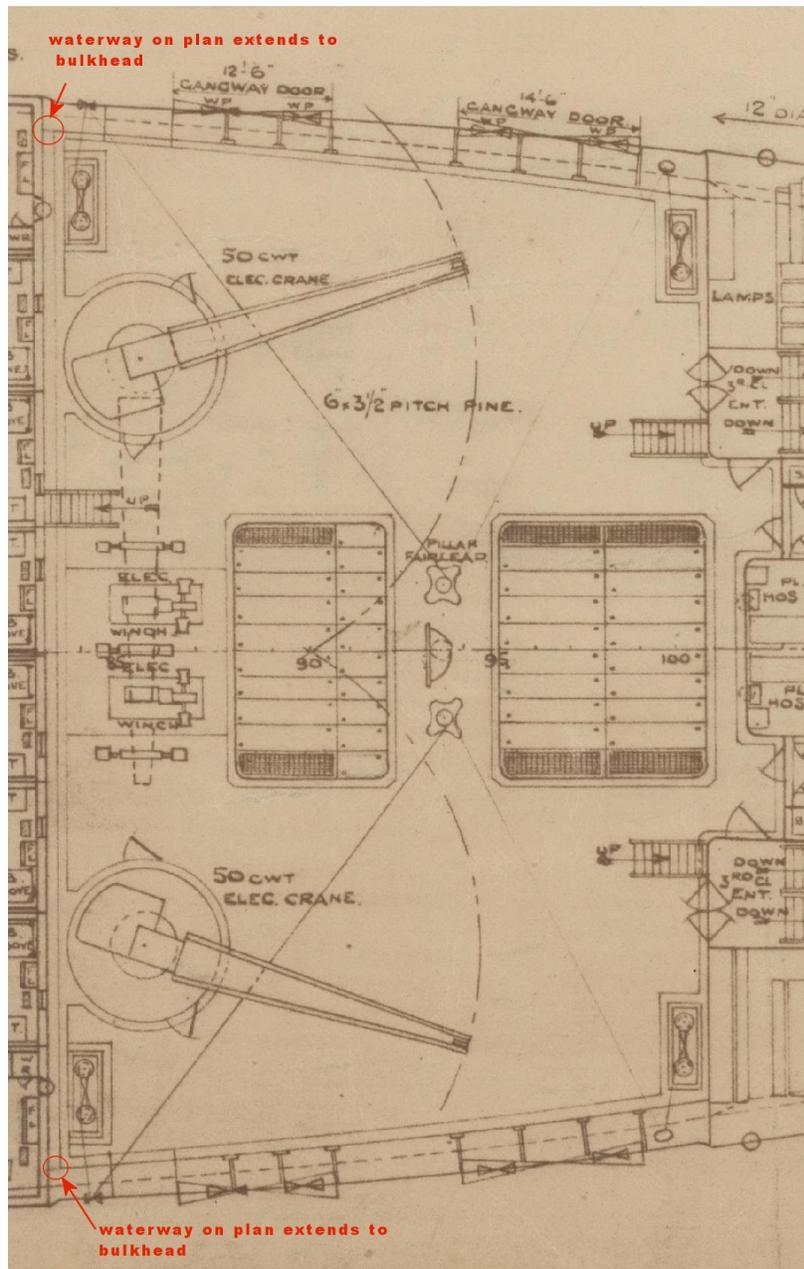


Figure 4

Inboard edges of P & S waterways extend to the aft bulkhead

Figure 6 shows the notation given for the 15 – ½ inch port waterway.

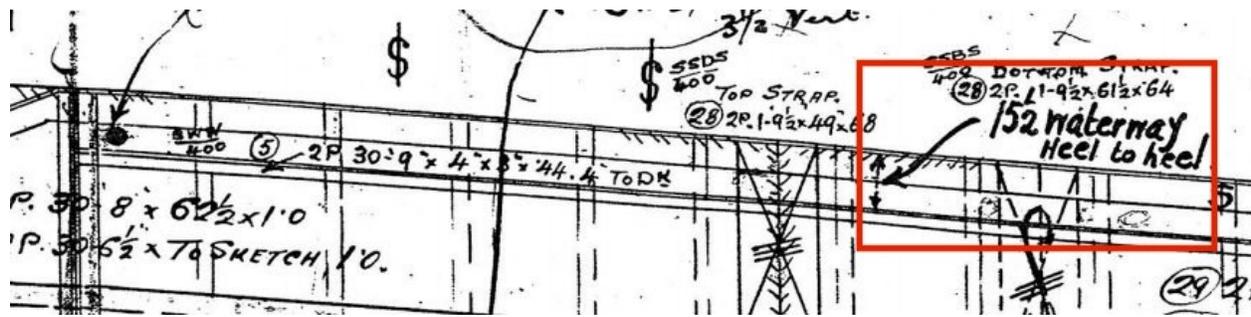


Figure 6

Notation on plan of 15 – ½ inch port waterway

The starboard waterway has identical mirrored construction.

Figure 7 shows the construction where the aft bulkhead met the deck plates.

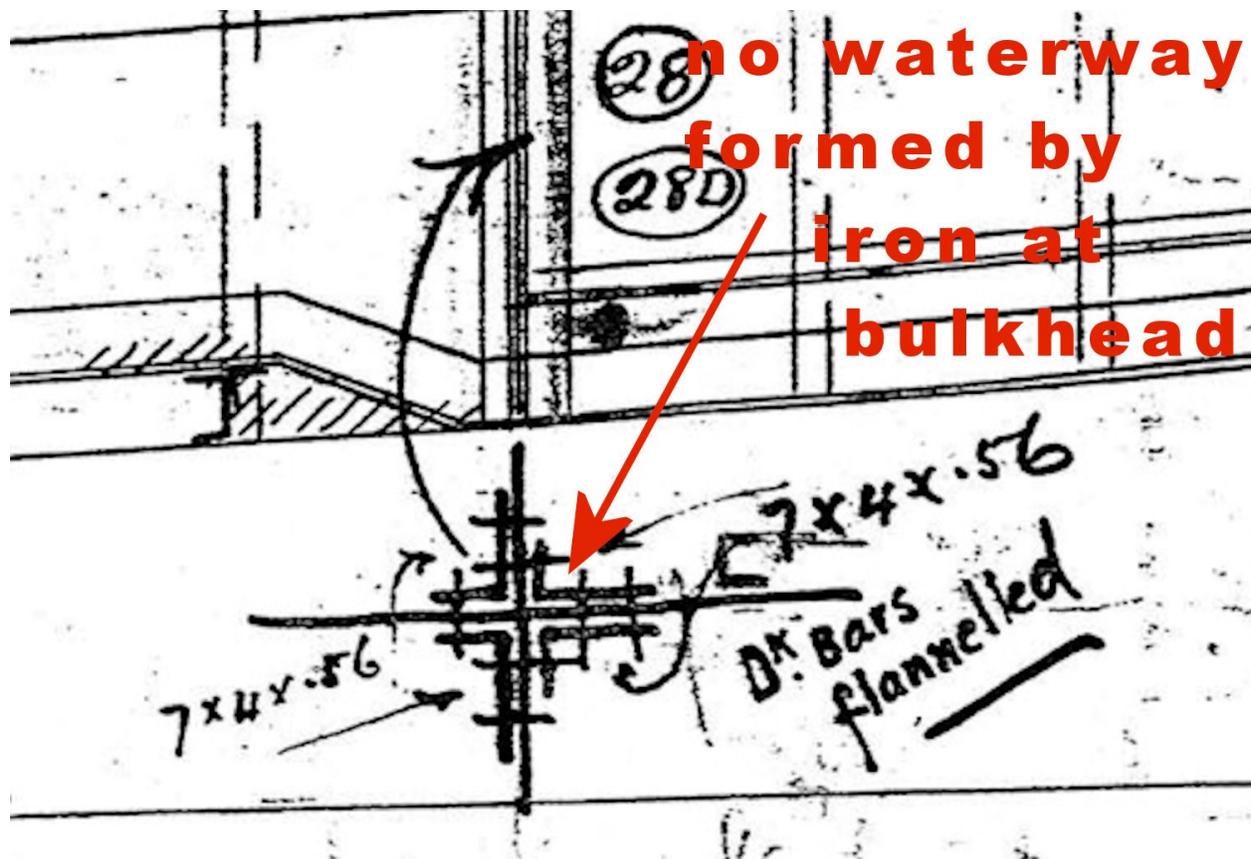


Figure 7

Details from iron plan showing how aft bulkhead/deck plates were constructed

It is made up of four angle irons to strengthen the deck/bulkhead joint. A waterway is formed by opposing angle irons which form a three-sided trough. There is nothing like this shown forward of the aft bulkhead. There is also no notation indicating a waterway against the aft bulkhead. For anyone who might believe that a waterway was added later, when such modifications were made, there were notes made on the iron plan. There are no such modification notes on the iron plan.

Analysis

The contention that there was a waterway against the aft bulkhead of the forward well deck is not supported by plans. There are no photos with enough clarity to contradict the plans. Evidence from deck iron plans carries more weight than any G/A plan. In this case we see that the primary evidence offered to support an aft waterway is superseded by a later G/A plan and the C deck iron plan which show that there were only P & S waterways. This is another case where weak evidence from a single source was used to craft a novel theory when there was more and better evidence available.