

## Ice: Clear and Absent Danger

by Senan Molony

### ***Titanic Research***

Sunday 14 October 2007

This is an argument hewn from ice&hellip; a substance that offers solidity and occasional clarity.

But it is also an argument about the absence of ice &ndash; meaning nothing less than clear water, with all the plain sailing that implies.

The Leyland liner *Californian* was effectively named by official Inquiries in 1912 as the vessel seen from the sinking *Titanic*

That craft was seen at a mean distance of 5.6 miles by *Titanic* evidence, and estimated at 5 miles or less by *Titanic* officers. Professional navigational officers instinctively know their own horizon, and this vessel is testified to have approached within middle distance.

There is no denying *Titanic* evidence about its own mystery ship &ndash; with visible sidelights (required officially to be seen at two miles), and a sidelight and stern light seen even from lifeboats on the water&hellip;

We now know where the *Titanic*

[Each minute of latitude represents one nautical mile, giving that material difference as the *Titanic* drifted and sank 2 hours and 40 minutes after striking her berg.]



**Captain Lord in summer whites aboard a Leyland liner**

The  
*Californian Titanic*

There can no longer be any question, therefore, of the *Titanic* journeying towards the Boston-bound liner,

as *Californian* Third Officer Charles Victor Groves believed she must have done.



**Captain Lord and officers of the Anglo-Saxon.**

Groves, who gave it as his opinion that another steamer stopped close to his own vessel that night was the *Titanic*, admitted (at Br. 8445): "If the latitudes are right, then of course I am wrong."

8446: If the latitude of your ship and that of the *Titanic* are anything approximately right, it follows that the vessel which you saw could not have been the *Titanic*?

Groves &mdash; Certainly not.

The wreck on the seabed proves conclusively that the *Titanic* was on her correct latitude line for New York, because the debris field lies substantially south of it.

The only remaining possibility, if the *Californian* is to be the mystery ship seen from the *Titanic*, is for the *Californian* to have broken off her line for Boston, and to have headed towards the *Titanic*, turning that 19-mile north/south separation into just five.

It will be seen that this indulges the theory that the *Titanic* had to be facing north after her iceberg impact (encountered when heading west!) and after subsequent attempts to "resume her course," as Lawrence Beesley puts it.

There is ample testimony of cautious renewed *Titanic* movement for a time after the failure of the initial iceberg-avoidance manoeuvre (which itself involved an attempt to go *south* of west, with the ship answering her helm by a few points before impact.)

It is necessary, among *Californian*-accusers, for the *Titanic* to be assumed pointing her bows to the north when all engines are finally stilled. Only in such a scenario can the *Californian* be painted as the mystery ship, the latter vessel being indisputably seen off the port bow of the *Titanic*, indeed almost directly in front of her.

Allowing this assumption (for the sake of argument) means placing the mystery ship an appropriate five miles north of the *Titanic*

*Titanic* ended up facing north are correct.

*Titanic*'s post-impact drift was southerly, and there is no reason why the wreck site longitude should not also give us a near-enough longitude for the mystery ship.

So the mystery ship, when seen from the *Titanic*

That's the spot the *Californian* must reach if she is to be the *Titanic*'s near visitor!

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**Field ice photographed on the morning of April 15, 1912,  
*Titanic* sinking, by Dr Marloth,  
ship's surgeon aboard the NDL *Frankfurt***  
Courtesy of the author

IT is necessary here, before building further, to rehearse some argument from *Mystery Ship Made Simple*

It deals with the importance of a position for the *Californian* that was transmitted earlier on the fatal night, heard and logged by *Titanic* and other ships, and sent out before any vessel got into difficulties.

This wireless message was broadcast by *Californian* at around 7.30pm her time. It related to a sighting an hour earlier, at 6.30pm on the *Californian*. It took the form of an ice warning to other shipping, and included the *Californian*'s position at the relevant time.


*"To Captain Antillian - 6.30pm apparent time ship; Latitude 42 3' North, Longitude 49 (Evans 8941, 8943; Br report p.43)*

The  
*Californian*

When the *Californian*

Four hours of steaming at 11 knots, her highest ordinary speed, gives 44 nautical miles travelled. A mileage of 43 is almost exactly right for a vessel that stopped nine minutes short of four hours. The *Californian* did not slacken speed &ndash; thus, it can be reasoned, there must have been nothing to cause her to do so. She was not troubled by ice for those four hours.

We think in justice to the Captain of the "CALIFORNIAN" we should draw your attention to the recorded Marconigram received by the "ANTILLIAN" which gives the "CALIFORNIAN's" position at 6.30.p.m. on the 14th, and this is consistent with the position at 10.30.p.m. when the engines were stopped for the night.

Yours truly,  
 For FREDERICK LAYLAND & COMPANY, LIMITED,  
  
 Manager.

**Letter sent by the Leyland Line to the British Inquiry, pointing out that the *Californian's* claimed stop position was consistent with pre-accident wireless transmissions, showing she was on course to Boston.**

No new wireless report about ice from the *Californian* for four hours indicates most strongly that she held her course to the West &mdash; staying north. If anything had caused her to deviate from her course, the only imaginable cause being ice, then she would have presumably sent a wireless about it, as she had done earlier.

This inference is further strengthened by the fact that she did send another wireless warning about the presence of ice when finally confronted by it.

After she had been halted, *Californian* sent a wireless to the *Titanic*, still speeding towards her unseen consummation, replied with the now-famous "Keep out, keep out, I am working Cape Race."

So where is the evidence, or the motivation, for the *Californian* to have headed in any way south?

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Leaving aside that sheer unlikelihood, and the fact that no-one on the *Californian* spoke about an altered course, especially not officer Groves, let's try to get the *Californian*

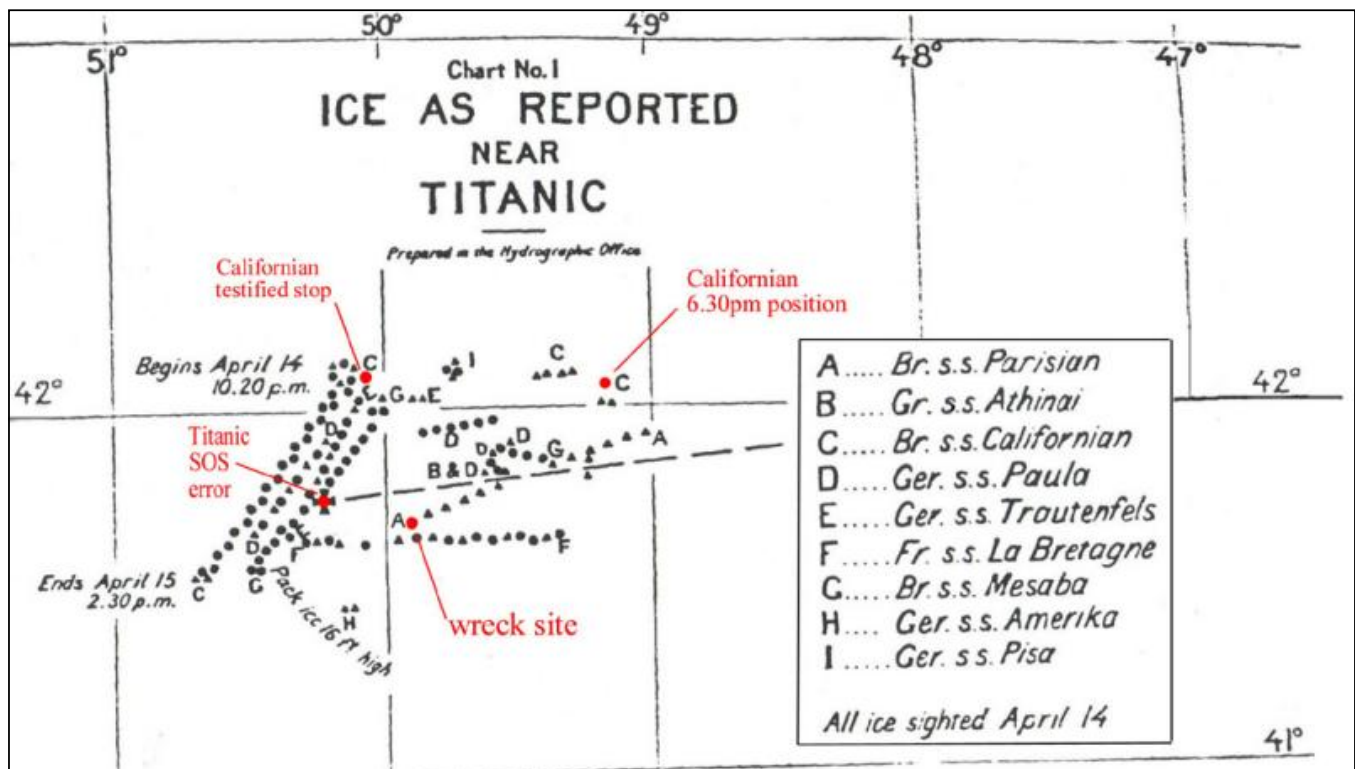
The reality is that with 43 miles steamed, she could have reached there. The distance to where the *Titanic* was later sinking is 41 nautical miles, but the distance to where the mystery ship would have been seen &mdash; if *Titanic* was pointing her bows to the north at this time &mdash; is 37 miles.

The *Californian* could have got there, but would have had to alter her course sharply to the southwest, and almost immediately after 6.30pm when she transmitted her earlier position.

This is the diagonal she must make &mdash; from the more northern and eastern position to a southern and western one. And the great difficulty with sending her there comes down to just one deadly issue: ice.

This is the last insurmountable difficulty with sending the *Californian* southwest, whether for any reason or no reason. Ice would have intervened.

This chart, drawn up by US Naval Hydrographer Captain John Knapp, shows the problem. It shows all the ice reported to his office for April 14, 1912.



The dotted line represents what Knapp imagined the *Titanic* course line to be. It is north of here that the mystery ship was seen, if the preferred theory of *Californian*-accusers is indulged.

above

It implies that the *Californian*, sent whimsically on a diagonal SW course from her 6.30pm position, would certainly have encountered ice. Even if not blocked directly by ice, she would have seen it at close quarters &ndash; and would therefore have reported it to other shipping by wireless. No ship is in trouble yet; and the *Californian* has shown herself assiduous at warning others.

Furthermore, on seeing extensive ice, the likelihood in such a scenario is that the *Californian* (finding herself "guessing wrong" by going to the SW), would have reduced her speed quite significantly. Even if she could thread the needle, therefore, the concept of her continuing at operational top speed of 11 knots is redundant.

*Californian* will have travelled  $2 \times 11$  (22), plus  $2 \times 5.5$  (11) = 33. It's not enough to reach the mystery ship position.

No intermediate ice reports from *Californian*

The distance from the testified

*Californian Californian* after she has broadcast the fact of her being stopped at around 11pm her time.

But the sheer unlikelihood of her getting underway again, after she has stopped, is destroyed by the fact that no-one on the *Californian* suggested for a moment that the vessel renewed engine movement before daylight.

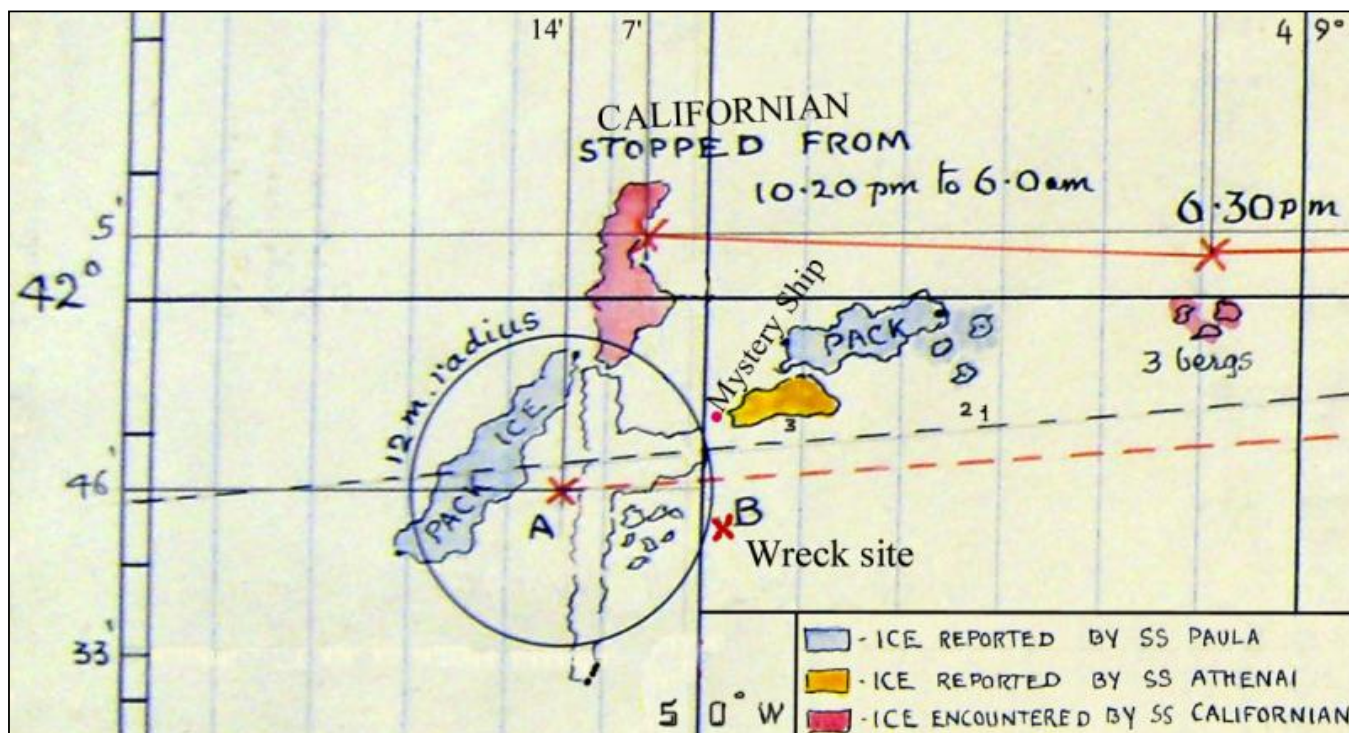
Even if we were to assume instead that the *Californian* continued steaming West until she reached the precise longitude of the *Titanic* seabed wreck, and only at that point made a 90 degree turn to port to head south to the assumed mystery ship position, there are problems.

Such a course would keep the *Californian* not

This gives the *Californian* 35 miles of westward progress since 6.30pm, but the distance to the assumed mystery ship spot, on making that hypothetical 90-degree turn to the south, is a further 14 miles.

That's a total of 49 miles. The *Californian* could only ever have done 43 or 44 miles in the near four hours from 6.30pm until she stopped at 10.21pm, both times according to her clock. Even in this dog-leg scenario, she simply can't reach the required location.

This is a map prepared by A. M. Foweraker, an early & amateur - sceptic of the official version of events, in 1912. Foweraker was a lawyer, but is better known today for his watercolours.



The map shows ice reported by both the German oil tanker *Paula* and the Greek steamer *Athinai* (also rendered *Athenai*), as well as the *Californian*

The official SOS position is shown at (A), and the author of the present article has added the now-known *Titanic* wreck position (B), as well as that deduced position for the mystery ship in the assumed scenario.

The black dotted line shows Knapp's assumed course of the *Titanic*; and the red dotted one the more likely course that Foweraker extrapolated from evidence of a delayed *Titanic* turn at the 'corner.' This article makes use of the Knapp line & since a slightly more southerly mystery ship position would be even harder for the *Californian* to achieve.

The *Paula* ice is slightly misrepresented in this drawing, although Foweraker's observation at the bottom of his personally-prepared chart remains entirely sound:

[Californian]

The ice reports show that had she altered her course to the Southward she would have entered a region full of pack ice before 10.20.

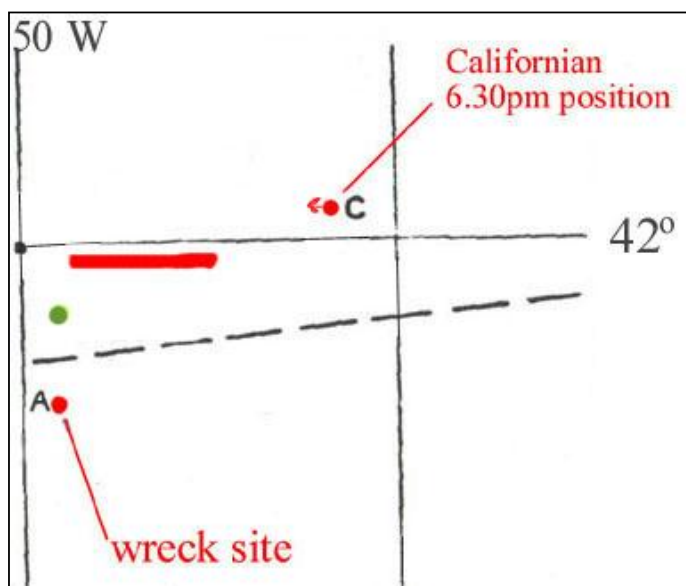
*Paula* transmitted to the US hydrographic office:

*April 14, forenoon, from latitude 41*

The *Paula* is reporting a field of heavy pack ice that is two miles "high" (in latitude, probably as far as her Master can see), and no fewer than 16 nautical miles long (22 minutes of longitude in this location).

That ice will have drifted slowly further east from the forenoon to the evening, and could be eight to ten miles further east by the time the *Californian* is "diverted" SW in order to fulfil her condemned role in the mystery ship position.

In other words, the band of heavy *Paula* pack ice, shown red below in its before-noon position, would effectively deny any diagonal to the *Californian*. She can't get through &ndash; would have stopped, and would have transmitted early that she was 'stopped, surrounded by ice' as she later did in reality.



The green spot, above, represents the assumed mystery ship position. Clearly the sheer mass of ice would have made it extremely difficult to reach.

Samuel Halpern, in a research article on this site, has laid stress on the probability of the *Titanic* encountering ice in the southern box. From ice reports, the probability appears even greater for a vessel entering diagonally from the north.

Ignoring the lack of motive or impulse for the *Californian*

From the evidence of Captain Lord:

Lord: Well we had had a report of this ice three or four days before, so we were just taking the extra precautions.

Senator Smith: You had had reports of this ice? - Yes, sir.

Senator Smith: From whom had you received those reports? - From Capt. Barr, of the *Caronia*, on the 13th of April. That was the day before.

&hellip;The next warning was when I saw it myself at half past 6, I think. I do not remember any others. There may have been something. No, sir; I mistake. We had the *Parisian*; we were talking with the *Parisian*, who was some distance ahead of us, and I was asking if he had seen any ice,

and to let me know, as he was so far ahead, before dark came on; and he gave me reports."

Still proceeding on the same course at same speed, being anxious and watchful on account of the numerous ice reports that were flying around by wireless from various steamers, I remained steadily on the bridge my-

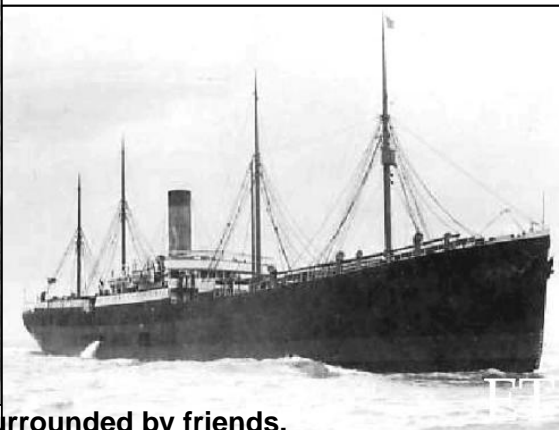
*Savannah Morning News* Courtesy of the author

Lord had received a report from the *Parisian* of ice in the southern box on April 14, he testified, and a similar (but days earlier) one from the *Nieuw Amsterdam*.

*Parisian*

### So why enter it?

The *Californian* PV was never read into the record, so we cannot be sure of the totality of ice reports she received, or whether all were even passed on to the Master. However her Captain appears to have been sufficiently aware of them to know that any deviation of course to the south or southwest, especially after dark, would have been sheer folly.



**Captain Lord at the wheel, surrounded by friends.**

He personally took the wheel to avoid ice in the late evening. Any sharp course diversion by the Leyland liner would have required his express command.

*(Vessel is illustrative Leylander, not Californian.)*

And even if Captain Lord had known absolutely nothing of any ice reports, a decision to enter the southern box would likely have been swiftly answered by formidable icy obstruction &ndash; however surprising to a skipper unaware of prior warnings.

This article has granted every indulgence to the theory that the *Californian* was the *Titanic*'s mystery ship. *Titanic* evidence as to distance cannot be denied&hellip; unless we also overrule the contending armies at Gettysburg, for example, and tell them that their front lines were actually twenty miles from each other&hellip;

The mystery ship had "beautiful lights," in the phrase of Officer Boxhall, who later spoke of seeing a line of her portholes. That ship was near &ndash; so near that the *Titanic* energetically flashed her Morse lamp towards her.

We may place the *Titanic* to face north, as anyone may like, but *Titanic* testimony as to a five mile separation must be held (even if officers Lowe and Pitman offered four miles and two miles respectively at the 1913 court case *Ryan v. OSNC*). It is their mystery ship, after all.

As to the question of whether the *Californian* could or would have reached the assumed mystery ship spot&hellip; Does it really now need to be asked?

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