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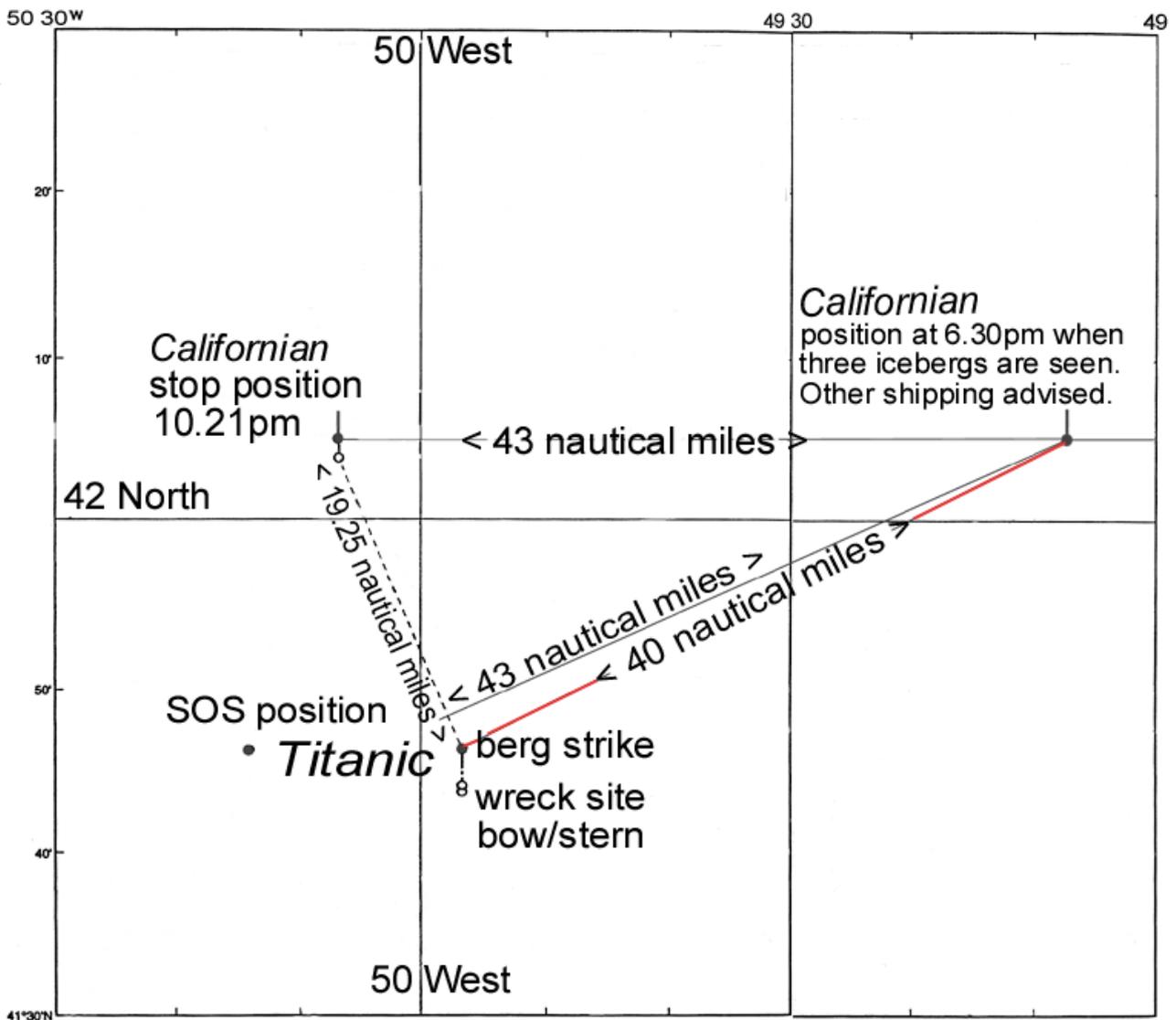
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Mystery Ship made simple

by Senan Molony

THE PERSISTENT notion that the *Californian* is the *Titanic*'s mystery ship - seen at an average of 5.6 miles off the port bow by Inquiry evidence from *Titanic* witnesses - can be exploded by this relatively simple map.



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The most crucial factor, discovered 73 years after the sinking, is the location of the actual wreck site co-ordinates, shown here more than 13 miles to the east and south of the 1912 SOS position.

The Inquiries in 1912 assumed that the *Titanic's* SOS position was correct. Because of apparent inconsistencies in relation to where the rockets were seen, *inter alia*, Lord Mersey next assumed that the *Californian's* position was "not accurate." In fact matters were the other way about.

The *Californian's* Captain and crew gave evidence of their vessel stopping north of the 42nd parallel of latitude, and west of the line of 50 degrees of longitude.

They stopped at 10.21pm *Californian* time, long in advance of the *Titanic's* collision. This fact, that the *Californian* had stopped, is confirmed by the *Californian's* having wirelessed to other shipping that she was "stopped and surrounded by ice" - a message that was famously rebuffed by the still-speeding *Titanic*.

But even earlier, hours before the *Titanic* struck, the *Californian* sent her own position to shipping when seeing three bergs to her southward, in 42° 05' N, 49°09' W. This 6.30pm *Californian* position is therefore indisputable, since it cannot have been pre-fabricated to cover for something that has not yet happened – *Titanic's* sinking. We can rely upon it.

In the nearly four hours thereafter, from 6.30 to 10.21, *Californian* was steaming due west at 11 knots. Four hours at that speed should give 44 nautical miles. She in fact covered 43 nautical miles when the positions are compared.

Californian said she stopped for the night in 42° 05' N, 50°07' W. (Check the mileage difference between the two positions for yourself on any latitude-longitude converter on the internet, such as this one: www.indo.com/distance/index.html.)

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Now let's try to put the *Californian* as close as possible to the *Titanic*, as if she were indeed the Mystery Ship. We now know where the *Titanic* sank, thanks to Robert Ballard. And the shortest distance between any two points is a straight line.

The *Titanic* wreck today lies on the seabed at 41° 43'N, 49°56'W. This is a point that is 41 nautical miles away from where the *Californian* was at 6.30pm her time.

Of course the *Titanic* drifted to the south at a rate of one knot from the time of berg impact until the sinking. The two hours and forty minutes of the sinking equates to a 2.66 mile drift, and must be taken into account.

Giving this northing back to the *Titanic* (rounded up to 3nm) gives a likely point of impact with the iceberg of 41° 46' N, 49°56' W.

The difference between where the *Californian* was, and where the *Titanic* hits the berg, is now 40 nautical miles.

Of course, the Mystery Ship was only seen an hour after the collision, which means a further drift to the south by the *Titanic* of one mile since collision. The Mystery Ship was also seen to be *approaching*, whereas *Californian* was stopped – but let's not rub it in.

Applying the **43** miles that the *Californian* did (from 6.30pm until she stopped) **towards** the *Titanic* where the latter actually struck the berg (**40** nm away) shows the *Californian* could have got to the Mystery Ship vicinity.

Yet the key point is that to do so, she would have had to alter course sharply to the southwest – and do so immediately from 6.30pm!

Anyone who wants the *Californian* to be the *Titanic*'s Mystery Ship, is forced, by reason of the now-known position of the wreck, to attribute a bizarre change of

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course to the *Californian* in comparison to where we know she was heading earlier in the evening.

No such change of course was mentioned by anyone aboard the *Californian*, although statements were taken from all her crew. The vessel's destination was Boston, which lies above the 42nd parallel, and which in turn means the *Californian* should not descend below this line at all. Look up Boston on a map – and see the arm of Cape Cod above 42° N.

The only thing, it might be argued, that could cause the *Californian* to divert would be ice.

But we know for an indisputable **fact** that she was not troubled by ice for another four hours after making her 6.30pm position report. Therefore she would surely have remained steaming west (above 42° N) until she should meet any obstruction.

She did so at 10.21pm *Californian* time, when she wirelessed that she was "stopped and surrounded by ice." This in itself indicates she had been heading due west all that time.

Let it be remembered that no-one on board the *Californian* attributed to her any change of course of the nature required. Third Officer Groves, the man who convinced himself and a court that the nearby ship he had seen was the *Titanic*, had every faith that his Captain's stop position that night was accurate – and said so.

He also agreed that if the *Californian's* stated latitude (northing) was correct, and if the *Titanic's* accepted latitude also reliable, then neither ship could have seen the other. Counsel for the Leyland Line put it to him:

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Br. 8445 (Mr. Robertson Dunlop) You will appreciate, Mr. Groves, that if the latitudes are right it follows that your opinion must be wrong?—"If the latitudes are right, then of course I am wrong."

The difference is that we now know the *Titanic's* latitude. We can see it on the seabed.

In the absence of any unexplained sudden plunge to the southwest by the *Californian*, Groves is now confirmed as wrong. His ship was nowhere near the *Titanic*.

The *Californian* is a red herring. And argument that the adding of other ships does not subtract the *Californian* is specious, facile, and worst of all, irrelevant.

The simple fact of the matter, overwhelming in its truth and stark importance, is that the vessel seen tantalisingly close to the *Titanic* is one whose name we do not know.

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