

# Deck Sheathing under Titanic's Anchor Handling Gear

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## Introduction

The purpose of this article is to clear up confusion about the wooden deck sheathing under the anchor handling gear on Titanic's forecastle. The details which will be examined apply to all the ships of the Olympic class. The primary confusion seems to be about how the transition was made between the forward midline teak deck sheathing of the forecastle which was wider and thicker and the outboard pitch pine deck sheathing which was narrower and thinner. Photos and drawings will be used to illustrate the methods which were used at the Harland and Wolff shipyard.

## Midline Forecastle Deck Sheathing

Well before the advent of Titanic, ships increased the width and thickness of wooden deck sheathing in the area of the anchor handling gear. In Figure 1 we see the thicker wider planks of the sheathing of Lusitania's forecastle.

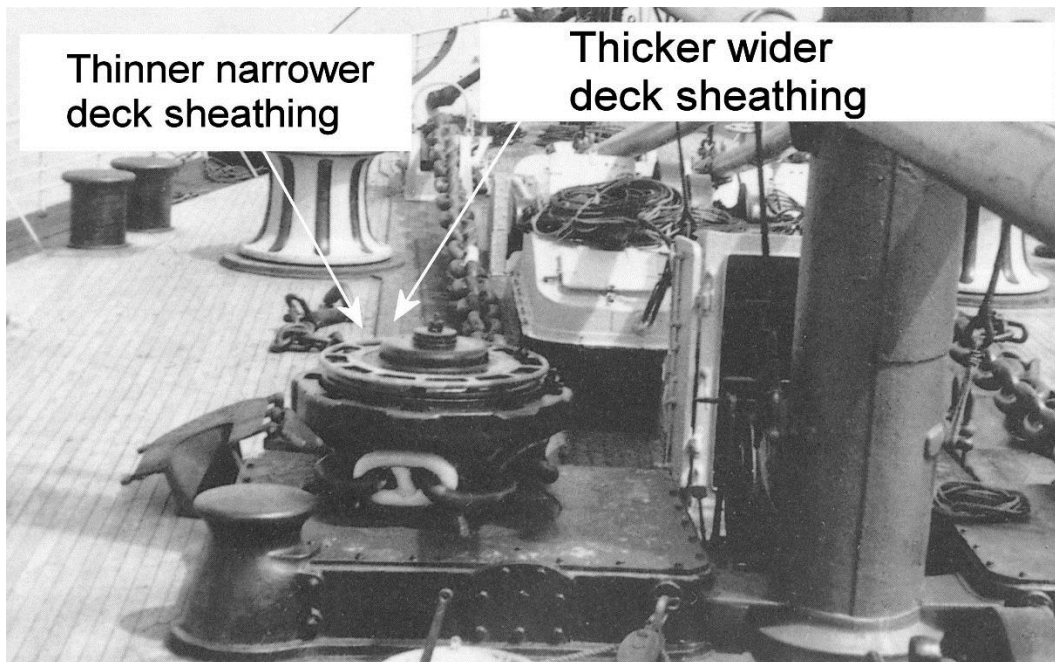


Figure 1

In Lusitania's case this was installed under the anchor cable runs to resist the action of the steel anchor cable on the sheathing. One can see that there is a "step" down to the thinner narrow sheathing. In Figure 2 we see a plan of Olympic/Titanic's forecastle.

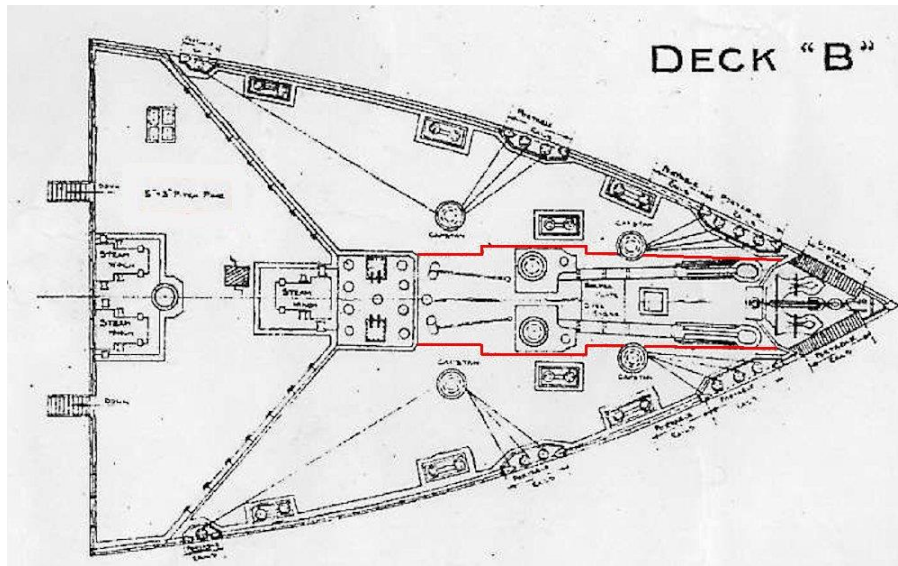


Figure 2

The midline (darker brown planks) was sheathed with teak planking which was 10 in. wide by 4 in. thick. The area outboard of this area was sheathed with 5 in. wide by 3 in. thick pitch pine. Figure 3 shows the individual teak sheathing planks in the midline area of Titanic's forecastle.

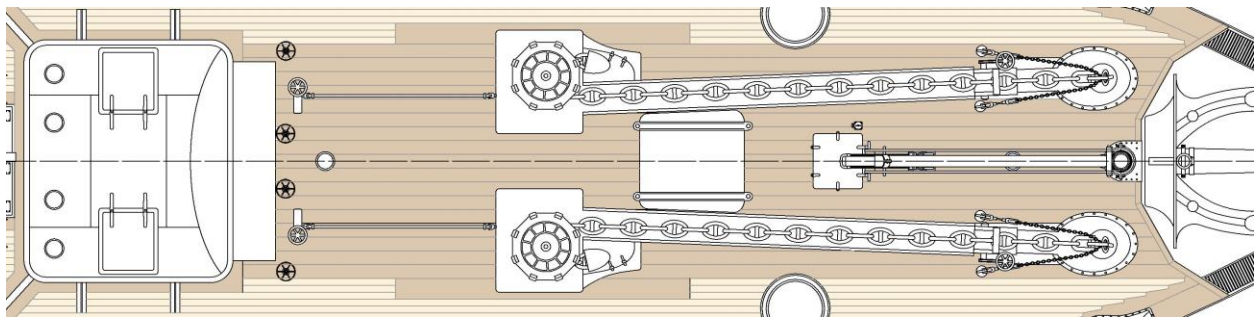


Figure 3

### Titanic's Midline Teak Forecastle Deck Sheathing

While Titanic and her Olympic Class sisters had midline teak sheathing of their forecastle which was thicker and wider than the outboard sheathing, the anchor cable could not contact the sheathing. Throughout most of the run of the anchor cable on Titanic's forecastle deck, it was supported by a raised teak trough through which the cable ran as is seen in Figure 4.



Figure 4

The trough was covered on its inner load bearing surfaces by galvanized steel. Even though the anchor cable did not directly touch the deck sheathing, they still used wider thicker sheathing planks in this midline area. While there is no specific reference which explains this, it is thought that the heavier sheathing was used to resist the weight and movement of the anchor handling gear.

### Sheathing Plank Transition

This section will address the mistake some modelers have made when modeling this midline forecastle deck area. Where the 10 in. x 4 in. midline teak sheathing met the 5 in. x 3 in pitch pine outboard sheathing, the thicker teak sheathing planks stood 1 in. above the outboard pitch pine sheathing. Harland and Wolff finished this junction by planing the teak planks which met the pitch pine planks so that the transition was smooth. The best photo example we have is in Figure 5 which is a photo of the forecastle of S.S. Oceanic. You can see that the wider midline sheathing is planed to a smooth transition with the narrower thinner outboard sheathing. We do have a photo showing the transition on Olympic in Figure 6 but it is not as illustrative. Figure 7 is a cross sectional drawing of the deck sheathing showing how the transition is handled.

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Figure 5

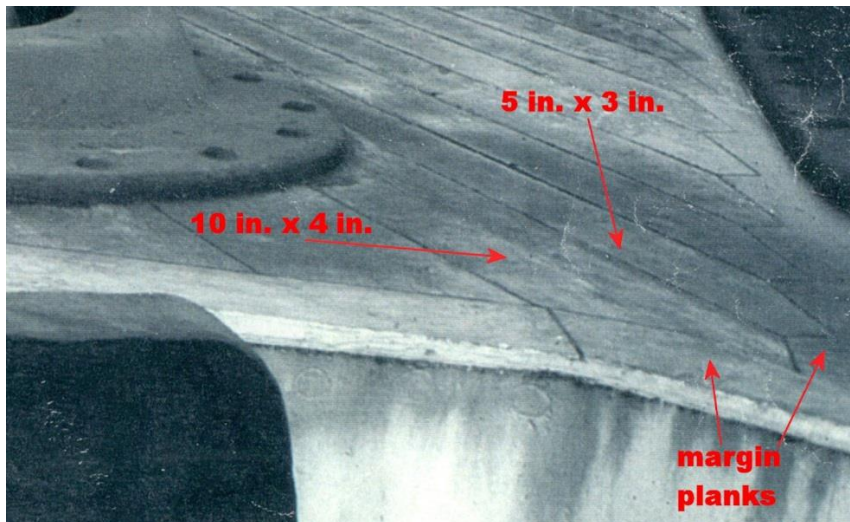


Figure 6

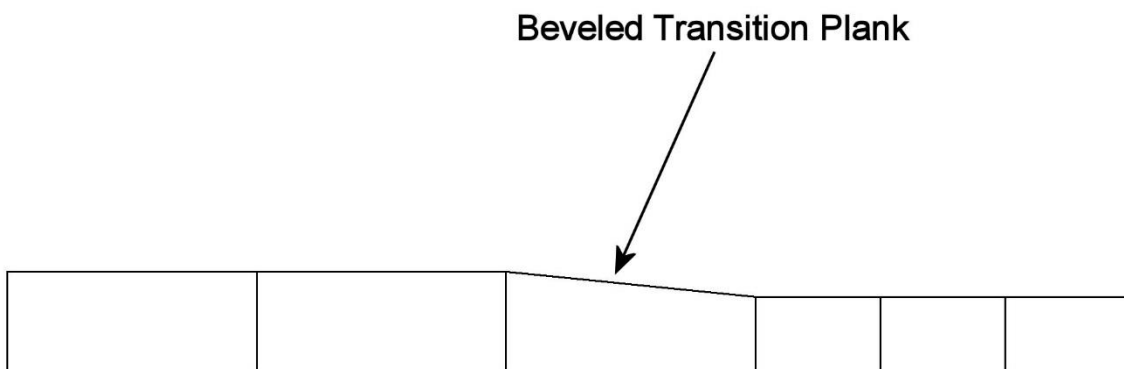


Figure 7

## The Fix

Since this article is directed at a problem found in models, the solution to the problem will be discussed. The problem of representing the wider thicker teak midline forecastle deck sheathing has more to do with the thickness than the width. The width is twice that of the outboard pitch pine deck sheathing. The thickness of the pitch pine sheathing is 80% of teak sheathing. The teak sheathing is only one inch thicker at full size. If you have a 1/144 scale model, that difference is only .007 in. That difference is roughly the thickness of two sheets of standard printer paper. It is probably beyond the ability of a model company or even a skilled individual modeler to produce wooden planks which consistently differ in their thickness by .007 in. In most models I've seen, the thickness of the midline sheathing is multiple inches in scale thickness greater than the surrounding planking. So if a modeler can't consistently produce plank sheathing to an exacting tolerance what can he do? My suggestion would be for the modeler to sand the wider thicker planks to the same thickness as the narrower thinner planks. At almost any scale distance one is viewing the model, this will create a more accurate appearance than smoothing the edges of planks which are much too thick.

The other major consideration is when to do this. Unfortunately, if the model is completed or deck equipment is permanently in place, it is probably too late to fix. Ideally the wider planks which are to be laid in the midline area should be sanded down to the thickness of the narrower planks before they are laid on the underlying deck. If the planking is already laid but no deck equipment is in place, I would suggest sanding down the entire area with the wider planks until its thickness equals that of the thinner surrounding planking.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this article has been to illustrate for modelers how the transition between the wider thicker midline teak forecastle deck sheathing and the narrower thinner outboard pitch pine forecastle deck sheathing is made. The thicker wider teak sheathing planks which form the junction with the narrower thinner outboard planks have their thickness planed down to match the outboard pitch pine planks to form a smooth transition.