

Titanic's Navigating and Docking Bridge Telegraph Dial Faces

By Bob Read, D.M.D

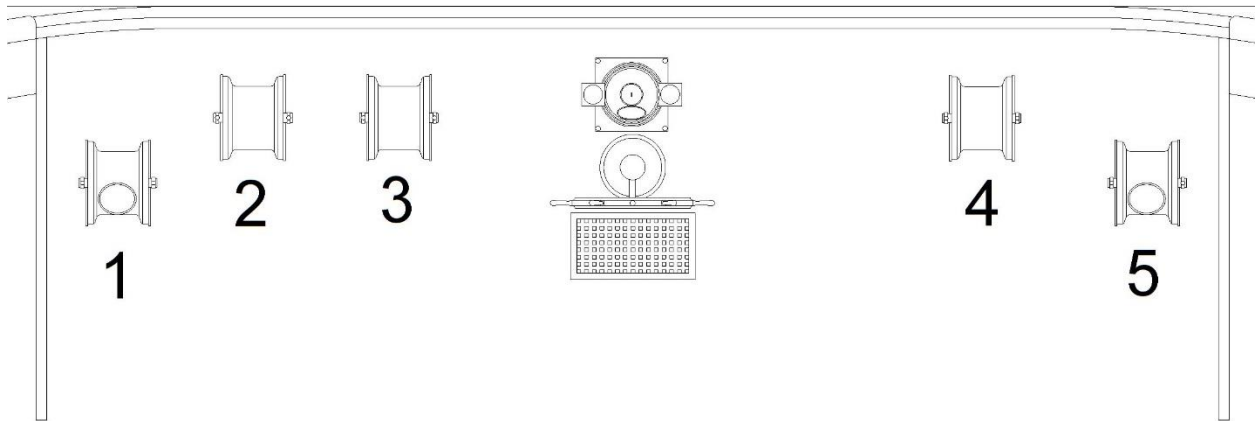
Introduction

The benchmark article about the function of *Titanic's* navigating and docking bridge telegraphs is [Titanic's Engine-Order Telegraphs](#) by Bill Sauder and Parks Stephenson. This exhaustive article covered nearly every aspect of the telegraphs. Excellent computer generated images of the telegraphs were produced for their article. The images of the telegraphs showed the telegraph dial faces but parts of them were obscured by the indicator handles. The purpose of this article is to reproduce the dial faces of all of the navigating and docking bridge telegraphs in isolation for the benefit of the modeler who wishes to recreate the telegraphs for his model. In a few isolated instances I differ with the Sauder and Stephenson paper about the appearance of the telegraph dials. This paper will give the rationale for why I have produced my version of the dial faces. In these instances both my and the previously mentioned authors' interpretations are based on speculation since we don't have a thorough photographic survey of all the telegraph dial faces. I will just try to make the case for why the areas differ in my interpretations.

Telegraph Locations

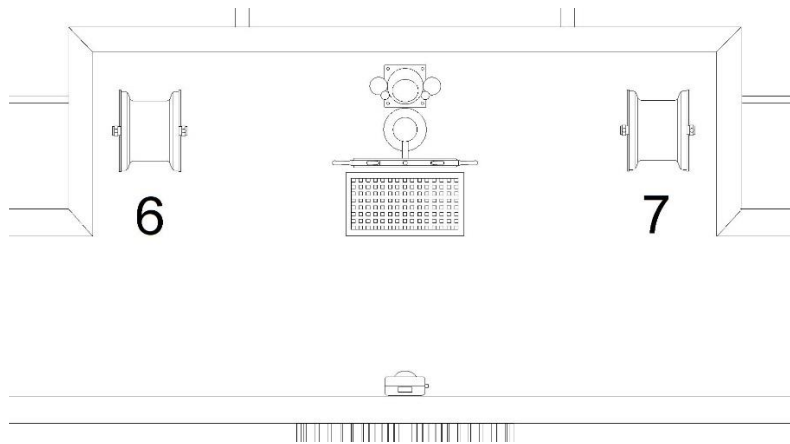
So that the individual telegraphs can be referenced without confusion, Figures 1 and 2 are shown below to show the locations of the telegraphs. Figure 1 is a plan view of the navigating bridge while Figure 2 is a plan view of the docking bridge. Each telegraph is assigned a number. The numbers start from port and proceed to starboard on both drawings.

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Navigating Bridge

Figure 1



Docking Bridge

Figure 2

The identification of the telegraphs is as follows:

Telegraph #1: Combined port and starboard reciprocating engine order with tell-tale

Telegraph #2: Combined port and starboard docking order/ starboard steering order

Telegraph #3: Emergency back-up combined port and starboard reciprocating engine order

Telegraph #4: Combined port and starboard advisory engine order “maneuvering telegraph”

Telegraph #5: Combined port and starboard reciprocating engine order with tell-tale

Telegraph #6: Combined port and starboard docking order/ starboard steering order

Telegraph #7: Combined port and starboard advisory engine order “maneuvering telegraph”

Telegraphs #1 and #5

Combined port and starboard reciprocating engine order with tell-tale



Port Dial Face

Figure 2



Starboard Dial Face

Figure 4

My interpretation of the dial faces of this telegraph differs from the Sauder/Stephenson article in that it omits the red lettered "Port Engine" and the green lettered "Starboard Engine". The Sauder/Stephenson dial faces appear as Figure 4 and Figure 5.



Sauder/Stephenson version port dial face

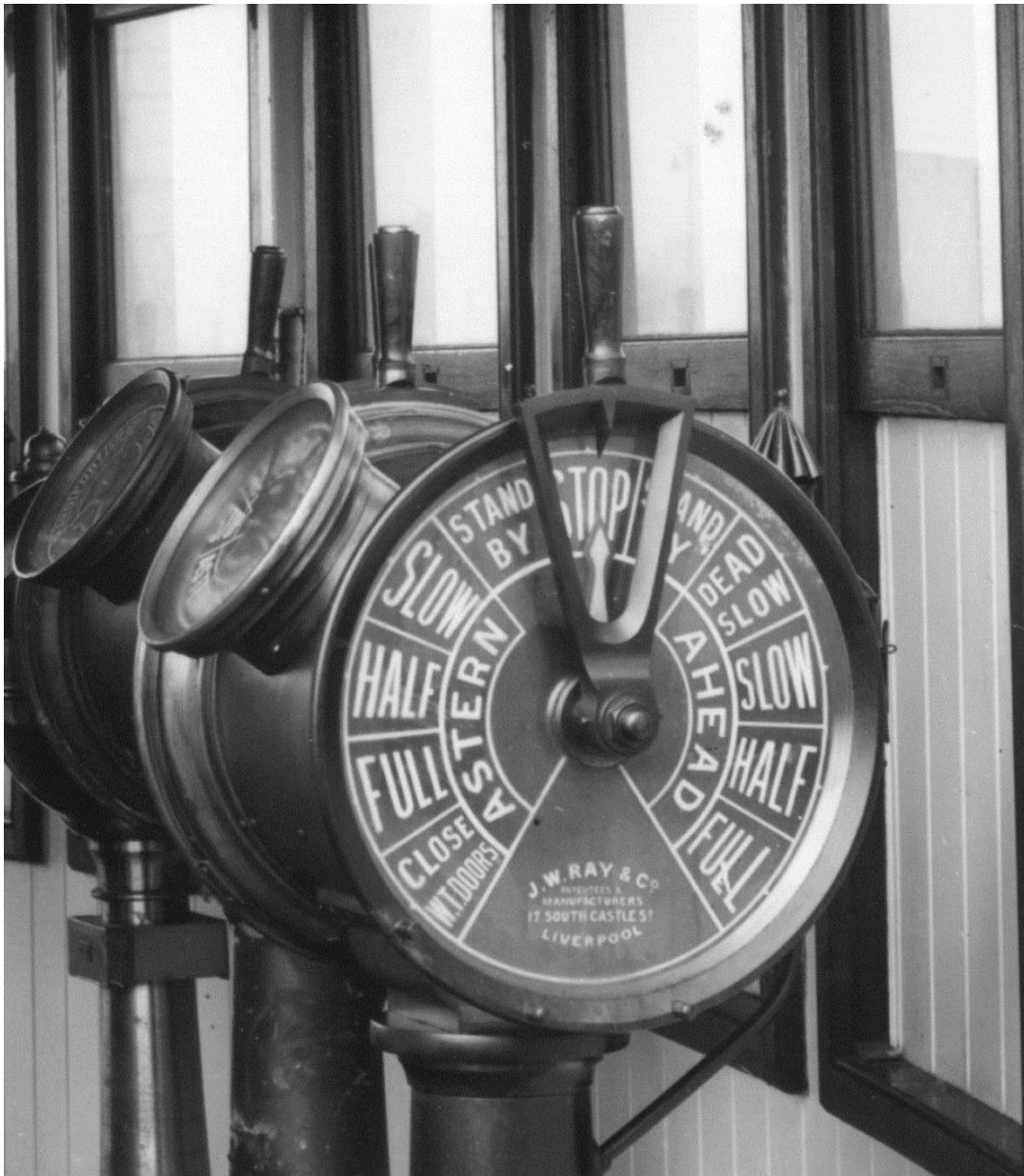
Figure 5



Sauder/Stephenson version starboard dial face

Figure 6

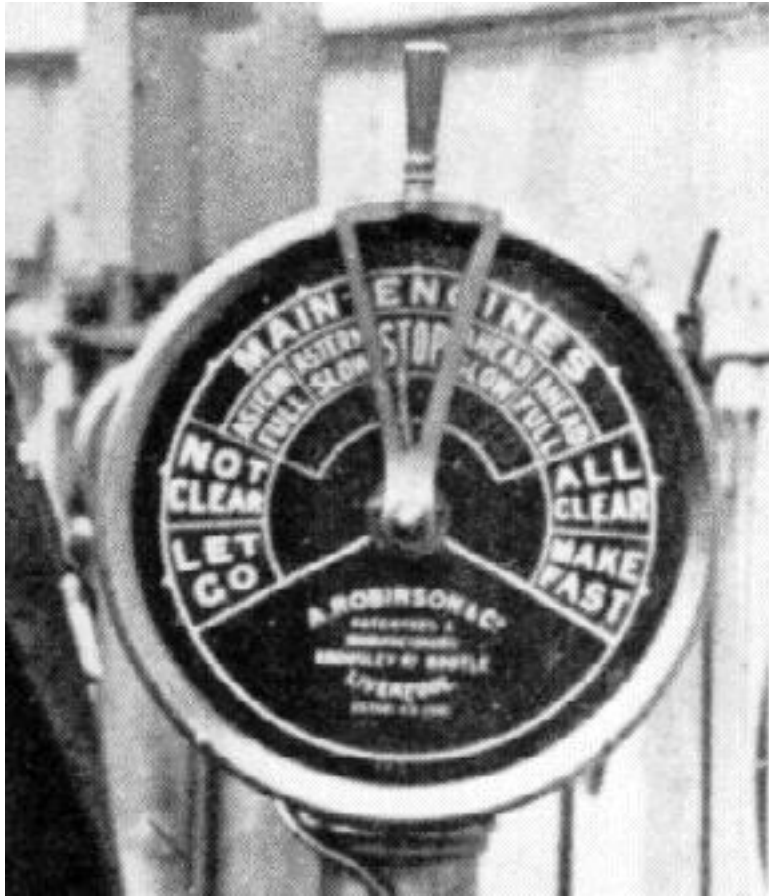
I have studied numerous photos of J.W. Ray engine order telegraphs from the *Titanic* era and I can't find any that have this indication of "Port Engine" or "Starboard Engine". An objection may be raised that this colored lettering would "disappear" in the blue sensitive black and white photos of the day. I agree that the red lettering on the port dial would "disappear". However the green lettering of the starboard would be visible albeit more subtle in shading than the white lettering. Figure 7 shows the starboard dial of one of S.S. *Oceanic's* engine order telegraphs. Where we would expect to see "Starboard Engine" there is nothing discernable.



S.S. *Oceanic* starboard dial of engine order telegraph

Figure 7

Figure 8 shows one of S.S. *Aquitania*'s telegraphs from a different manufacturer but with the word "Starboard" in green lettering. It is fainter than the white lettering but it is still visible.



S.S. *Aquitania* telegraph

Figure 8

To demonstrate the effect of blue sensitive black and white film of the era, I have taken the color photos of the Sauder/Stephenson engine order telegraphs with the red lettering on the port face and green lettering on the starboard face and converted them to black and white with a blue sensitive filter. Figure 9 shows the port dial face with the red lettering which has "disappeared" in the conversion process.

Perhaps the most definitive evidence that there was no indication of either "Port Engine" or "Stbd. Engine" is the fact that where the engine identifiers are proposed the text isn't completely outlined. If we look at J.W. Ray telegraphs, all inner text is outlined on all sides.



Sauder/Stephenson black and white converted port dial face

Figure 9

Figure 10 shows the starboard dial face of the Sauder/Stephenson dial face which has been converted to black and white with a blue sensitive filter. While less distinct than the white lettering, the words "Starboard Engine" are still visible.



Sauder/Stephenson black and white converted starboard dial face

Figure 10

Engine Order Telegraphs #1 & #5 Tell Tale Dials

There were only two telegraphs which had an aft facing engine direction “tell tale”. These were engine order telegraphs #1 and #5. Figure 11 shows the dial face of this engine direction “tell tale”.



Engine Order Telegraphs #1 and #5 Tell Tale Dials

Figure 11

Telegraphs #2 and #6

Telegraphs #2 and #6 are docking order telegraphs which have emergency steering commands in addition to the docking commands on the starboard dial. The dials are shown in Figures 12 and 13.

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Docking Order Telegraph #2 and #6 Port Dial Face

Figure 12



Docking Order Telegraph #2 and #6 Starboard Dial Face

Figure 13

Telegraph #3

Telegraph #3 is an emergency back-up engine order telegraph. The port and starboard dial faces are the same as #1 and #5 but this telegraph does not have an engine “tell tale”.

Telegraphs #4 and #7

Telegraphs #4 and #7 were called “maneuvering telegraphs” in the Sauder/Stephenson article. My personal preference is to call them “advisory engine order telegraphs”. Telegraph #4 had red lettering on both port and starboard faces. The rationale for this is given in the Sauder/Stephenson article. Telegraph #7 had white lettering which was not previously discussed. I believe it had white lettering because there was no risk of confusion about its purpose on the docking bridge. The port and starboard dial faces of telegraph #4 are shown in Figures 14 and 15. The port and starboard dial faces of telegraph #7 are shown in Figures 16 and 17.



Advisory Engine Order Telegraph #4 Port Dial Face

Figure 14



Advisory Engine Order Telegraph #4 Starboard Dial Face

Figure 15



Advisory Engine Order Telegraph #7 Port Dial Face

Figure 16



Advisory Engine Order Telegraph #7 Starboard Dial Face

Figure 17

Conclusion

This article has sought to show unobstructed views of telegraph dial faces on *Titanic's* navigating bridge and the docking bridge. No elaboration of the function of these telegraphs has been given. Since this ground was admirably covered in the linked article by Bill Sauder and Parks Stephenson, no further explanation was thought to be necessary. There were minor changes suggested to a couple of the telegraph dial faces in the Sauder/Stephenson article.

