

Diaper Education Trail

The museum contains a permanent display of the town's maritime history and many of the artefacts have connections with the Diapers. Use this trail to take you around the museum, it will finish at the 'Fisherman, Ferryman, Sailor, Spy - The Diapers of Itchen Ferry' exhibit

(1) Entrance to the Museum

Percy Colin Diaper (1922-1986) started work for the Cunard White Star Line as a commis waiter, he went into the army during the Second World War but returned to Cunard when it ended working as a waiter on the *Queen Elizabeth*. At the age of 18 his son Ray (b1941) also joined Cunard as an Engineers Steward, also on the *Queen Elizabeth* and in 1963 his other son John (1944-2005) also joined the same ship. All three were serving together till 1964 when Ray left to get married and John left as the life did not suit him. Percy continued to work on the *Queen Elizabeth* as a bedroom steward until the ship was retired. He then left Cunard for a job ashore with Ford motors.



Ray Diaper

(2) Model of Ocean Terminal/ Docks board

Vera Diaper (1914-1971) worked all her life for Southern Railway which became the the Docks Board, working at Dock House, Canute Road. She was secretary in the Dockmaster's Office under Capt Pellow and Capt Kirtons.



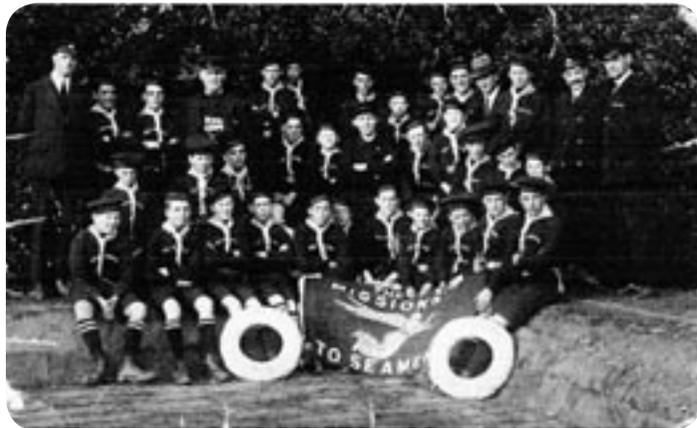
Vera Diaper, first left

(3) Dockworkers

In 1910 Grace Diaper, the daughter of Tommy 'Dutch' Diaper married her cousin Robert 'Robin' Diaper (b1882) and they had three children, Robin, Norman (named after the yacht in which her father was such a successful captain) and Gwen. Robin was a stevedore working in the docks. In those days the cargo boats would have two gangplanks, the stevedores went up one empty handed but came down the other fully loaded. It was heavy work. They lived in Wharncliffe Road in Itchen Ferry which was bombed in the same raid that destroyed the Supermarine works. The family sheltered in a cupboard under the stairs. The house had a direct hit and collapsed around them, Robin with his strength supported the wreckage long enough for Grace and the children to escape. Unfortunately the shock from the bombs exploding fractured the gas pipe leading to the meter in the cupboard and Robin was killed. The damage to the area was so great that they never rebuilt it but left the ruins for the Canadian troops to practice street fighting in the build up to D Day.



Grace & Robert, 56 Bridge Road



(4) Model of Docks

4.1 Mayflower

The *Mayflower* probably carried as many as twenty or more average seamen, but history only records a couple of their names. The *Mayflower* is known to have carried four quartermasters, gunners, a cook, a carpenter and boatswain, all their names unknown. However it seems a member of the Parker family who were cousins of the Diapers may have been on board.

In the early 20th century *Mayflower* scholar Charles Banks identified John or Thomas Parker as a crewmember. This is based on a 1750 Superior Court deposition of John Phillips. He stated that when he was twelve his father

told him 'that Sagadahock had the name of Parkers Island given to it from one Thomas Parker who as said John Phillips was Informed was Mate of the first ship that came from England with the Plymouth People and was uncle to my father John Phillips and father to Thomas Parker who

then lived on Parkers Island.'. Thomas Parker's father was John Parker, and so according to Banks must have been a mate on the *Mayflower*.



Mayflower Memorial

4.2 Red Funnel

The most adventurous career of a Red Funnel commander was that of Lieut. Cecil Diaper RNVR (1906-1993), he joined the company in 1932 becoming one of their youngest masters in 1936 after first going to sea in 1922 as bridge boy on the liner *Adriatic*. Cecil was in peace time commander of the Red Funnel steamer, *Duchess of Cornwall*. He began his war work on the Dover minesweeper patrol and experienced the Dunkirk evacuation where the *Gracie Fields*, one of the most popular Red Funnel steamers went down. He was later posted abroad, escaping from Singapore just before it fell; he continued to serve in Far Eastern waters during the remainder of the war. He was one of sixteen children born to Charles & Jessie Diaper, his younger brother Andrew (b1922) also went to work for Red Funnel as did his nephew David (b1952).



Cecil Diaper

4.3 Floating Dry Dock 1924

In 1924 Thomas Diaper (1867-1949) was working for Mr Pinkerton of the famous detective agency, who asked him to secretly get ready his schooner the *Molly Hawk*, for a special job. The Prince of Wales was coming to Southampton to open the new floating dock and as part



Tom Diaper

(5) Bone Model Ships of Napoleonic War

During the Napoleonic War the fisherman of Itchen Ferry were keen to avoid the press gangs, one method was to sign up for the voluntary corps of Sea Fencibles who were responsible for guarding the coastline of Britain and Ireland between 1793 - 1810. Commanded by officers from the Royal Navy, they had to learn to use pikes and cannon and be living and have families in the local district which they guarded. They trained one day a month for the wage of one shilling, a rate which they also received in the event that they were needed to provide extra service. Unless the enemy invaded it was understood that they would not have to leave their locality but had permission to leave their location to go fishing or to the fish markets. In the year of Trafalgar, thirteen Diapers turned out most months for training: George from Portsmouth, Henry, John 1, John 2, Mark 1, Mark 2, Powell, Richard 1, Thomas 1, Thomas 2, Thomas 3, Thomas of Hamble, & William. (The officers gave those with the same name numbers to distinguish them).

(6) Shipyards

Vosper Thornycroft

Harold Solomon John Diaper (1921-1982) began work at Thornycrofts at fourteen years of age and stayed there until he retired. He began his career as an office boy and finished as Financial Controller. He was a founder member of the Sports & Social Club and Chairman of the Football Club and he was awarded the Queens Jubilee medal for Service to Industry for the work he had done at the company. He had followed his father John Diaper who had worked for J I Thornycrofts as a shipwright and his sister Gladys Diaper (1909-1974) who also spent her working life with the company in the Accounts Dept of the Woolston office.



Harold Diaper



Gladys & Vera Diaper, Wartime Christmas

(7) Paddle Steamers

SS Empress

When Melville Diaper (1914-2002) retired from the College of Air Training at Hamble his one ambition was to build a model steam engine powerful enough to pull passengers. He joined Fareham Model Engineering Society and after ten years fulfilled that ambition. His work was 'Commended' at the 1995 International Model Engineers exhibition held at Olympia.



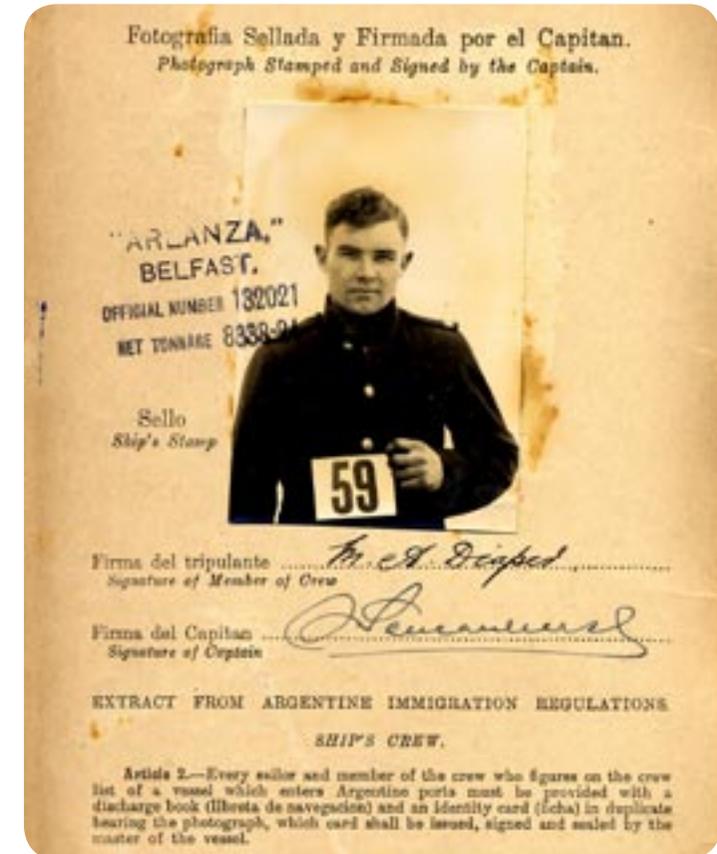
Melville Diaper

Melville was mentioned frequently in the local press during the 1950's championing the rescue of the oscillating steam engines of the soon to be scrapped paddle steam *Empress* which had been built in 1879

(Go up back staircase)

(8) Royal Mail Lines

Melville Alexander Diaper (1914-2002) was a member of Peartree Church, Woolston and educated at Itchen Grammar School. On leaving school he trained as a Marine Engineer and after qualifying signed on as Junior 6th Engineer officer with the Royal Mail Lines ship *SS Arlanza* in 1935 on the South American run. His first salary was 10s 9d a day whilst on shore, and £11 per month when at sea. At the outbreak of war, he went into aircraft engineering and was later a civilian attached to RAF Coastal Command investigating all the plane crashes countrywide. He became head of works at MacMerry in Scotland, always going up with the test pilot when a plane flew for the first time, although the pilot wore a parachute, Melville never did. He finished his working life as a licensed engineer at the College of Air Training in Hamble. He also built his own sailing boat and competed in a number of regattas.



(9) Union Castle Lines

George Charles Diaper b1890, the son of William Diaper fisherman of Itchen Ferry served as a seaman on the *Guildford Castle* between July and November 1918. His certificate of discharge records he was 5' 9" tall with grey eyes and brown hair with a fresh complexion. His character for both ability and general conduct was deemed to be very good and he gave good service on that voyage. He finished his career working as a clerk in the docks for British Railways.



Charles Diaper

(10) Stella

Although no Diapers were on the ship *Stella* which ran between Southampton and the Channel Isles, many Diapers can be found in the seamen's records on those islands. A single voyage is recorded of Joseph Diaper who gives his date of birth as 1827. He was probably the son of William and Elizabeth Diaper who had a boy called Joseph born that year. He was almost certainly the same Joseph Diaper who drowned in Southampton Water, aged 33 in 1861. He was at that time a pilot of a boat belonging



Mayflower Memorial

to James C Penny of West Key. He left a widow and six children who were without any means of subsistence beyond the charity of his fellow mariners who raised a small subscription for their relief. He had been piloting the ship *Massilia* when there was collision with a customs boat that was being towed by the ship and Joseph went overboard. He had only recently saved the lives of 120 people when the ship *Eastern Monarch* had been destroyed and had rescued Captain Harrison of the *Great Eastern* not half a mile from where he lost his life. His body was picked up by Thomas Diaper, a fisherman in his trawl net. It was likely that Joseph, like most mariners at this time, did not swim.

(11) Titanic

John Diaper (1885-1955), fireman, signed on for the maiden voyage of the *Titanic* on the 6th April 1912 at a wage of £6 per month, recording his age as 24, when he was actually 27. He had transferred from the *Titanic's* sister ship the *Olympic*. On the fateful night he was on lifeboat duty helping to launch the boats in great difficulty as the ship was listing to such a degree. He was ordered into the last boat by his officer, one can only suppose the skills learnt rowing and sailing on the Itchen stood him in good stead. When he returned home he only sailed twice more, before giving up the sea for good. He went on to serve in the First World War, where he was wounded, he again proved a survivor and went on to live to old age.



John Diaper

John Lovell Diaper was not so lucky, he signed on as a grill cook under the name John Lovell aged 32 (even though he was 38) and went down with the ship.

For further information on the
Diaper Heritage Association
tel 023 8060 2195
Or email djgeoffknight@msn.com