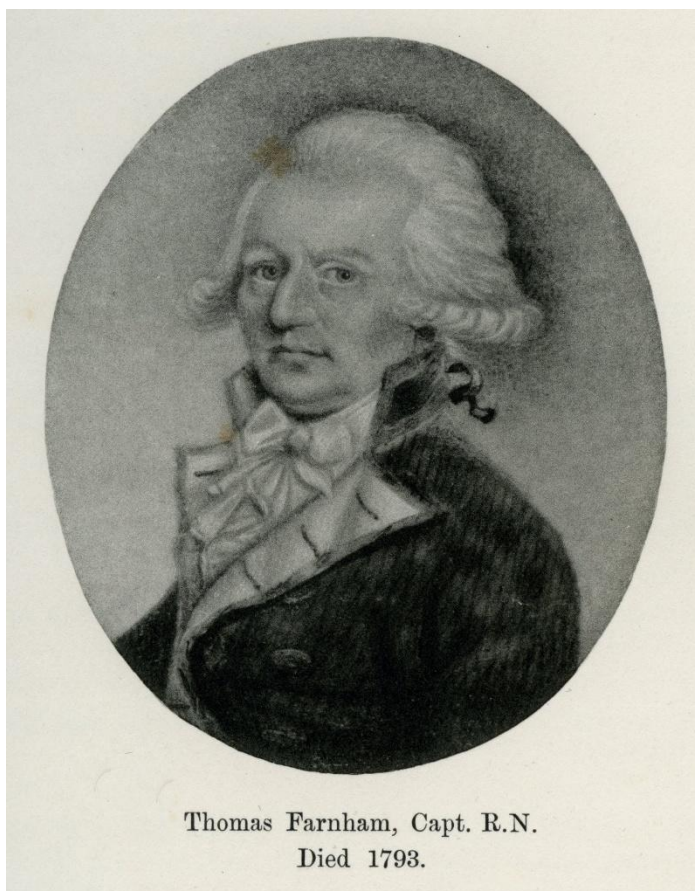


## Captain Thomas Farnham, RN

Thomas Farnham was born on October 30th, 1743, the son of Edward and Easter Farnham, at the Over Hall in Quorndon. The sixth born, four of his brothers predeceased him whilst one of his sisters became the Countess of Denbigh.

Thomas joined the Royal Navy and was commissioned a Royal Navy Lieutenant on 3 October 1771, as a junior Lieutenant. He was aboard Vice-Admiral Lord Howe's flagship, the 64-gun HMS Eagle serving under Captain Henry Duncan and, was in North American waters during 1776-7. He acted as Commander of the captured French Navy 32-gun ship Concord. Having commissioned the 12-gun brig HMS Diligent in August 1777, he commanded her thereafter in North American waters, being engaged against the rebels in the Hudson River and later off New York in the following spring.



Thomas Farnham RN, 1743 – 1793  
From Quorndon Records by G F Farnham

He was promoted commander on 3 April 1779, and with the 16-gun sloop HMS Nautilus joined Commodore Sir George Collier's campaign where he earned his senior officer's praise for his destruction of enemy vessels during the Penobscot Expedition. The Penobscot Expedition took place in July–August 1779 in Massachusetts, (now Maine) USA and is often described as the worst American naval disaster before Pearl Harbour, a failed attempt to dislodge a British Fort George fortification in which Captain Thomas Farnham played a notable part. The Americans fled up the Penobscot River, burning or scuttling their entire fleet of over forty vessels to avoid capture. It was a complete British victory.



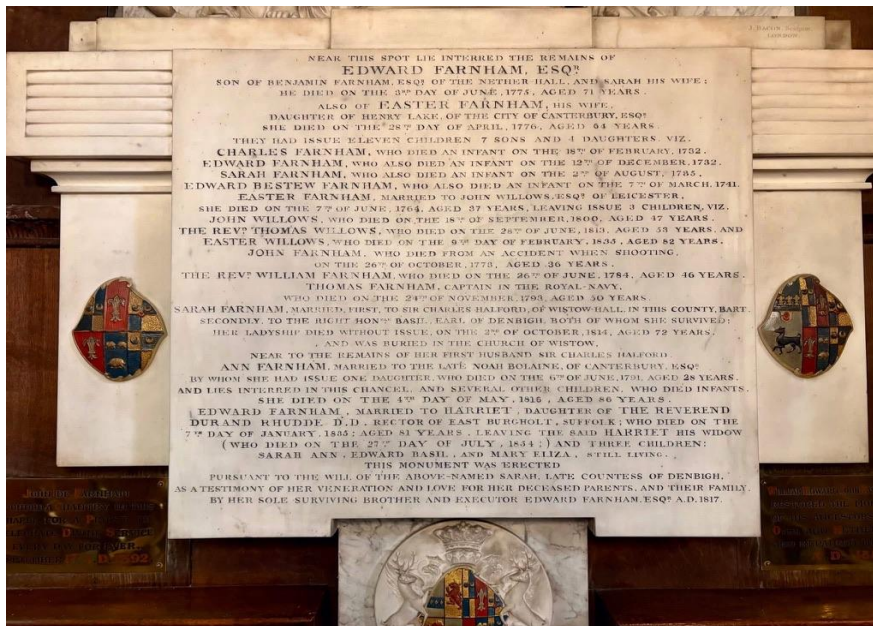
*Sir George Collier's Squadron in Penobscot Bay, 14th August 1779 - Oil - Art Marine*

Thomas's conduct during the defence strengthened his professional reputation, contributing to his promotion to Post-Captain in March 1782. This was a major step, once "posted," an officer entered the senior list from which admirals were later chosen. For an officer from Quorn, this was a significant moment, active service in a decisive imperial naval engagement. The Nautilus was paid off at New York in June 1780 and Thomas went on half-pay (It should be noted that it was not unusual for Royal Navy, post-captains to be placed on half-pay when they were not actively commanding a ship, effectively retained, awaiting a new assignment). However, in July 1781, following representations by his friend Joseph Cradock to Lord Sandwich at the Admiralty, Thomas Farnham was appointed to the 12-gun sloop HMS Kite which he fitted out at Portsmouth. He later commanded the 74-gun ship of the line HMS Alexander in an acting capacity for Captain Lord Longford in Rear-Admiral Kempenfelt's brilliant action with the French Navy commander Comte de Guichen on 12 December.

On 27 March 1782 Thomas was Captain and Commander of the 32-gun HMS Thames for six months before again being placed on half-pay until March 1783, when Capt. Farnham recommissioned the frigate HMS Winchelsea. The ship went out to Newfoundland in May as the flagship of Vice-Admiral John Campbell, and after wintering in England she set sail for that colony again in May 1784 and April 1785. HMS Winchelsea was paid off in December 1785. Meanwhile, in June 1783 Farnham had succeeded his elder brother in the ownership of the family estate at Quorndon. In May 1790, during the dispute

with Spain known as the Nootka Crisis, also known as the Spanish Armament, he recommissioned the 32-gun HMS Niger retaining her until the following January, then serving on the Newfoundland station.

Thomas Farnham's naval record ended in 1791. He died, aged 50 on 24<sup>th</sup> November 1793 and was buried in St. Bartholomew's Churchyard, Quorn. He is remembered on a memorial in the Farnham Chapel at St. Bartholomew's Church. Thomas never married and died before achieving the rank of Admiral.



*The Farnham Family memorial in the Farnham Chapel, Quorn*

According to the Leicestershire historian John Nichols, Capt. Thomas Farnham “was much respected in private life, and greatly esteemed as an officer, having particularly distinguished himself on several occasions, particularly during the American war. On the 14th of August 1779 being then commander of the Nautilus frigate, he burnt and destroyed several galleys of the enemy in the Bay of Penobscot; for which gallant action he received the approbation and thanks of Sir George Collier; and was afterwards promoted to the command of the Winchelsea frigate”.