



Dennis William Dowling

68763 Shoeing Smith Corporal, 41st Brigade, Royal Field and Horse Artillery

He 'died of wounds' on 21st March 1918 in France, aged 25

Dennis was buried at Rocquigny-Equancourt British Cemetery, Somme, France

Dennis Dowling was the oldest son of William Dowling, albeit from his second marriage. We know a fair bit about William Dowling's first wife due to the evidence given by Emma Fennel at the inquest on Sarah Ann Dowling, wife of the man who had just been awarded the job of Sexton and Parish Clerk. Emma Fennel was a deaf launderess living one door away from the Redenhall Rectory for many years.

DOWLING—FELLOWES.—16th inst., at the parish church, Redenhall, by the Ven. Archdeacon Perowne, William, second son of Simon Dowling, Wortwell, to Sarah Ann, eldest daughter of the late William Fellowes, Garvestone.

Bury and Norwich Post
23 Oct 1883

Although they married in 1883, William and Sarah Ann Dowling nee Fellowes had no living children in 1891; their little girl, Josephine Jessie Dowling was baptised in 1887 but and buried in Redenhall in 1888, aged 9 months.

1887. 25 th Sept. Born 13 th July, 1887 No. 581	Josephine Jessie	William & Sarah Ann	Dowling	Redenhall	Team- men	A.C. Fitch, Curate
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In the 1891 census (signed off as completed on the 13th of April, shortly before her death) Sarah Anne Dowling claimed to be 39 years old, and a native of Garvestone; an impressive 11 years older than her husband William Dowling and as detailed below a bit of a reversal of her own parents' situation.

May 7 No. 526,	Sarah Anne	William & May Anne	Fellowes	Brakefield Garveston	Labourer
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Sarah Ann was the first child of William and Mary Ann Fellowes; he was 15 years her senior and the couple started their married life in the home of his parents appearing out in Brakefield Green, Garveston in the 1851 census. In 1861 she was mis-entered with her mother's name but was still the only child of the couple. By 1871 Sarah Ann was working as a housemaid in the household of a well to do ironmongers in Norwich; one of 4 servants in the establishment but by 1881, two years before her marriage, she was working as the cook in the household of Rector of Kirby Bedon.

Poor Sarah Ann, the only child of one union, the mother of a single child which died whilst still a baby, and far from home married to a much younger man; this wife of the Sexton and Parish Clerk ended her life in a pond behind her home near the church. Slightly confusing this home was in the parish of Wortwell, even though it was only a hundred yards or so from Redenhall Church. We even have a description of the house, newly built brick and slate, from when it was sold on in 1886.

**REDENHALL, with HARLESTON
and WORTWELL, NORFOLK.**
MADDISON and MILES
Will SELL by AUCTION, at the Swan Hotel, Harleston, on Monday, 12th July, 1886, at Six for Seven o'clock, in Five Lots,
THE FREEHOLD PROPERTIES, late of Mr. ROBER. BELL, Deceased, comprising—
AT REDENHALL,
Recently-erected Brick-and-Slated Small RESIDENCE, with Gardens, near the Church. Mr. W. Dowling, tenant. Rent, £7.

William Dowling had been employed as Sexton in early April 1891, at a provisional fee of £15 p.a as the replacement for William Godbolt who had filled the job for many years. Godbolt was extremely unhappy when after many years' service he was given no pension; he complained bitterly about this in a letter to the press but nevertheless wound up in

the workhouse by 1901, and there he died in 1905 aged 81.

Only a very few weeks after Dowling was awarded the post at Redenhall Church, tragedy struck. Dowling had been digging graves in the churchyard between 8.30 and his return home at 12.30 but was unphased by his wife's not unusual absence. He did say during the inquest, that his wife was in her usual state of health, but then went on to add that she had been complaining about her head and had been in a weak state of health and mind for more than a year. Having lit the fire at home he then went to a neighbour's house in search of his wife; it was there that his father caught up with him and broke the news that his wife had been found drowned in a pond close by. A Wortwell labourer had been at work in a nearby field and as he passed by the pond, spotted first a woman's hat and then a woman in the pond, drowned in about three feet of water. Widow and neighbour Emma Fennell gave evidence that Sarah Ann had for some time been in a 'very desponding state of mind'. It was also suggested that Mrs Dowling, who had been a cook to Mrs Perowne before her marriage 'about three years previously' (this rather confused me as the Dowlings had been married 8 years – did this mean it was only three years previously after the birth/death of her child she had stopped working?) may have been mentally affected by the sudden decease of her 'former mistress'¹

This 'former mistress' was Mrs Perowne, Hester Sancroft Holmes who married Perowne, the Rector of Harleston in 1876. Perhaps marrying the Rector's cook had helped Dowling get the job as the Sexton and Clerk at the expense of poor old William Godbolt? At the time he was a 'Team Man', a skilled agricultural job which involved managing a team of horses but hardly a clerical background.

Mrs Perowne had been seized by a fainting fit and died, suddenly after this fit, of heart failure at the rectory on the evening of the Friday the 17th of April 1891 Her husband, Archdeacon Perowne was travelling on the continent and had to be informed by telegram of the sad news of his wife's death,. Sarah Ann Dowling life was ended in the pond (or pit as referred to elsewhere) four days later on Tuesday 21st of April.

William Dowling seems to recover from his bereavement fairly rapidly, marrying in the summer of 1892, to Minnie Catherine Parker, two years younger than himself. By 1901 they had two children aged 7 and 6, 8 years later third child appeared. It may be that after the highly strung much older first wife, his second wife (who gave him three children) suited William very well.

Age	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian	Christian
18 66 Feb. 28 th No. 1198.	Frederick Samuel son of	Thomas & Louisa	Parker	Takenham	Currier	M. A. Atkinson
Feb. 28 th No. 1194.	Catherine Minnie daughter of	Louisa Parker	Takenham			M. A. Atkinson

10.590] Banns of Marriage between
 William Dowling,
 Rector, of this parish
 and
 Minnie Catherine Parker,
 Spinster, of this parish
 Time, Sunday, 29th May by H.C. Fitch Curate
 Time, Sunday, 5th June by F.J. Perowne Rector
 Time, Sunday, 12th June by H.C. Fitch Curate

Minnie was the daughter of a widowed lady, born at least 4 years after her mother had been widowed. Minnie's status as an illegitimate child was clear to those who could read between the lines; her older brother, Frederick, aged 10, was baptised on the same day as she was but whilst his parents were given as Louisa and Thomas Parker, Minnie's parents were just listed as being Louisa Parker. Rather more subtle than a number of entries in the Redenhall register where children were simply described as bastard or illegitimate.

No. 726	1894 28 th Jan. Born 2 nd Dec ^r 1893.	Dennis William	William Minnie Catherine	Dowling	Redenhall	Parish Clerk	F. J. Perowne Rector
No. 727							

The Parish Clerk, as might be expected, had his first-born son, Dennis William Dowling, baptised fairly rapidly at his church by

Rector Perowne, former employer of his first wife.

This Dennis Dowling, the oldest of Minnie and William Dowling's children, enlisted in Harleston on the 16th August 1914, one of the first tranches to do so. Appearing in the 1911 census as a blacksmith, he was a good candidate to be given the job of a shoeing smith. The traditional Mounted Cavalry were quickly dismounted in this 20th C war but a shoeing smith was a vital role in an era when most of the supplies were, once unloaded from the rear line trains, moved by mule and of course all the guns were also shifted using horses; Dennis, enlisted in an Artillery Rgt would have been shoeing these horses. Being a shoeing smith was relatively safe compared with being an infantryman and certainly a whole lot safer than being an officer. However, the job was still risky, as well as the work done tucked away in behind the lines smithies, the shoeing smith was also expected to either destroy horses beyond rescue or administer basic treatment to those who could be rescued. A considerable amount of training went into this role, the least skilled did 'cold shoeing' – fitting ready prepared shoes onto the animals. A proper shoeing smith was also expected to take on hoof trimming and general care of the animals' feet. Dowling, having survived 3 ½ years of war might have hoped to come home safely. The military records state that he died of wounds, perhaps just an unlucky shell.

Record No.	Registry No.	Soldier's Name	Regiment, Rank, No.	Date and Place of Death	CREDITS			CHARGES			Date of Authority	To whom Authorised	Amount Authorised			No. of List in which advertised
					Account and Date	£	s.	d.	Account and Date	£			s.	d.		
659066	528369	Dowling Dennis Williams	R.F.A. 9th Bde 8th H North France 68763	21.3.18 Redenhall 5.18	42	19	9	42	19	9	30.07.18	29.7.18 Mr. Munnice	42	19	9	request of Fa
												17.11.19 Mr. Munnice	22			

WA. GRATUITY.
 19.20 13.9.19
 transfer 6537
 Regd. Page 2535 £67
 Serial No. 24563

A. F. W. 5070 SENT
 DATE 23 JUL 1918

Dennis' mother appears to have been the beneficiary of his War Gratuity which, at the sizeable sum of £22, reflects both his length of service and his rank of corporal. She also received outstanding pay of almost £43, in total £65, a huge amount at the time. This seems a little strange, such moneys were usually just noted as going to both parents but according to the paperwork this was at the specific request of Dennis Dowling's father William.

Dennis' headstone bears the legend 'Jesu Mercy', no doubt deeply hoped for by this family with deep ties to St Mary, Redenhall.

WORTWELL

FUNERAL OF MR. W. DOWLING

The funeral took place at St. Mary's Church, Redenhall, on Wednesday of Mr. William Dowling, who died on Sunday at the age of 77. For nearly 39 years he was clerk and sexton at St. Mary's Church, Redenhall, and St. John's Church, Harleston, retiring about twelve years ago owing to failing health.

Mr. Dowling, who took office when he was twenty-six, was born at Say's Farm, Wortwell, and for a time also assisted his brother, the late Mr. R. C. Dowling, at Ivy Wood Farm, Wortwell. He was one of the oldest members of the Harleston Foresters.

The service was conducted by the Rector (the Rev. B. M. Pickering), and the family mourners were the widow, Mrs. F. Steward (daughter) Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Whipps, and Mrs. Townshend. Deceased's son, Mr. F. G. Dowling and Mr. Jas. Dowling (brother) were unable to attend.

Others present were: Mrs. Aldrich, Mrs. Brett, Mr. R. J. Smith, Messrs. J. A. Perfit, J. J. Davey, Miss Perowne, Miss Thorn-dyke, Mr. O. Hopkins, Mr. W. ... (HOM-)

Having lost a son in the first world war, when old William Dowling died in 1940, the second world war was raging in the skies above Norfolk; perhaps the war was the reason that his surviving son was unable to attend his funeral.

Whilst there was no mention of his first wife it is good to see that one of the Perownes attended the funeral of the man who had served his church for almost 4 decades, unlike his predecessor William would have enjoyed a pension, albeit one of the state pensions rather than a church pension. The Dowlings were held in high esteem; not only was William well respected but so was one of his brothers, Charles who had taken over the Ivy Farm in Wortwell when he was only 19 and went on to become one of the most respected farmers in the region.

William's second wife, Minnie nee Parker survived her husband by a goodly few years dying at the age of 88 in 1953 when it was revealed that she had not only been a leading light in the Mother's Union but had also helped pump the Organ bellows at St Mary's!

Whilst Dennis Dowling was our military Hero, I think we should also tip our hats to his father William who after such a difficult first marriage made such a successful second one.

Diss Express
30 Jan 1953

**MRS. M. C. DOWLING
(WORTWELL)**

The funeral service for Mrs. Minnie Catherine Dowling, of High Road, Wortwell, who died at the age of 88 years, took place at St. Mary's Church, Redenhall, on Friday.

Mrs. Dowling, who was born at Fakenham, was the widow of Mr. William Dowling, for a great number of years Clerk and Sexton at Redenhall Church and who died in 1940.

In her younger days, Mrs. Dowling had also assisted as caretaker and as an organ blower at St. Mary's, in addition to taking a keen and active part in other Church work. She had resided at Redenhall and in the neighbouring parish of Wortwell throughout her long married life, and was a member of the local Mothers' Union branch.

The Rector of Redenhall with Harleston and Wortwell, Canon B. M. Pickering, officiated at the service.

The family present were: Mrs. Steward, daughter; Mr. F. Dowling, son; and Mrs. Dowling, Mrs. Andrews, Mr. and Mrs. C. A. Whipps, Mrs. Townshend and Mrs. S. Flegg.

Friends present included: Mrs. Cod-