

A personal Tribute to a College Personality by Friends of Millbank

Matthew Laurie Dooley MBE, 1932 – 2005

Head Waiter, Headquarters Officers Mess, Royal Army Medical Corps



Matthew Dooley

Chairman's note

The following tribute has been composed from information largely provided by Val O'Connell (daughter of Mary Kerslake), Colonel (ret'd) John Richardson L/RAMC and Mrs Valerie Abraham. My own abiding personal impression of Mr Dooley is of gentility and a welcoming face, from my first encounter with him as a newly enrolled captain or in subsequent visits as a more senior officer.

The Mess at Millbank was the principal Mess of the Royal Army Medical Corps, providing a meeting place for officers of the Corps both regular and territorial. It was the venue for most of the official Corps events. For more information see the Friends of Millbank tribute to Mary Kerslake, who served as Officers Mess Manager for practically the whole of Matthew Dooley's own time as Head Waiter. She remained a stalwart friend to Matthew his whole life.



Commander in Chief's Certificate of Commendation



Mr Matthew Laurie Dooley known to every officer who has used the dining facilities of the RAMC Headquarters Mess, Millbank, has been awarded the Commander in Chief's Certificate of Commendation for highly meritorious service to the Army for the last 25 years.

Matthew joined the RAMC as a National Service soldier in February 1953 and was posted to Millbank where he served in the Officers' Mess as a waiter. Demobbed in the rank of Corporal in 1955 he continued in employment in the HQ Mess as a waiter and on the retirement of Mr Gray took over the duties of Head Waiter and it is in this appointment he is known to the officers of the RAMC.

He was born at Roscrea, Tipperary, Co. Tipperary, and came to England at the age of 15 to work as a waiter at a Bournemouth Hotel. He lived with his sister until he was called up for his period of National Service and now lives in a flat in Pimlico. He is not married, and in his spare time enjoys listening to records and going to the London shows.

Matthew Dooley is to be congratulated on receiving this rare award, it is well deserved as seven Directors General, and eleven Commandants of the Royal Army Medical College could testify were they all around to do so.

A pen portrait by Rick



Matthew Dooley, by Richard [Rick] Coleman (courtesy of Colonel Richardson)
<https://www.cartoonists.co.uk/rickcoleman/index.html>

A personal recollection by Brigadier (ret'd) Timothy Finnegan L/RAMC¹

I recall being given 'The Rod and the Serpent' article as part of my Postgraduate Medical Officers' (PGMO) Course in 1977.² I had been commissioned in December 1975 on qualification and did my second house job at Queen Alexandra Military Hospital (QAMH) Millbank in July-December 1976 as a Lieutenant. I must have been one of the last housemen there before it closed. I sometimes had lunch in the Officers' Mess, where Mrs Kerslake and her husband John were the managers, as noted in your College Personalities item.

Matthew Dooley was there also. This was long before the days of the bar. He would come and take one's order. Sue (my wife) would sometimes meet me there after work. (We had a quarter in Twickenham). She used to drink brandy and dry ginger then. After my PGMO Course we were posted to Episkopi, Cyprus (June 1977- June 1979). On our first visit to the Officers' Mess on return from Cyprus, Mr Dooley (never Matthew then) came up to her and asked, "Brandy and dry ginger Ma'am?" He was an amazing head waiter.

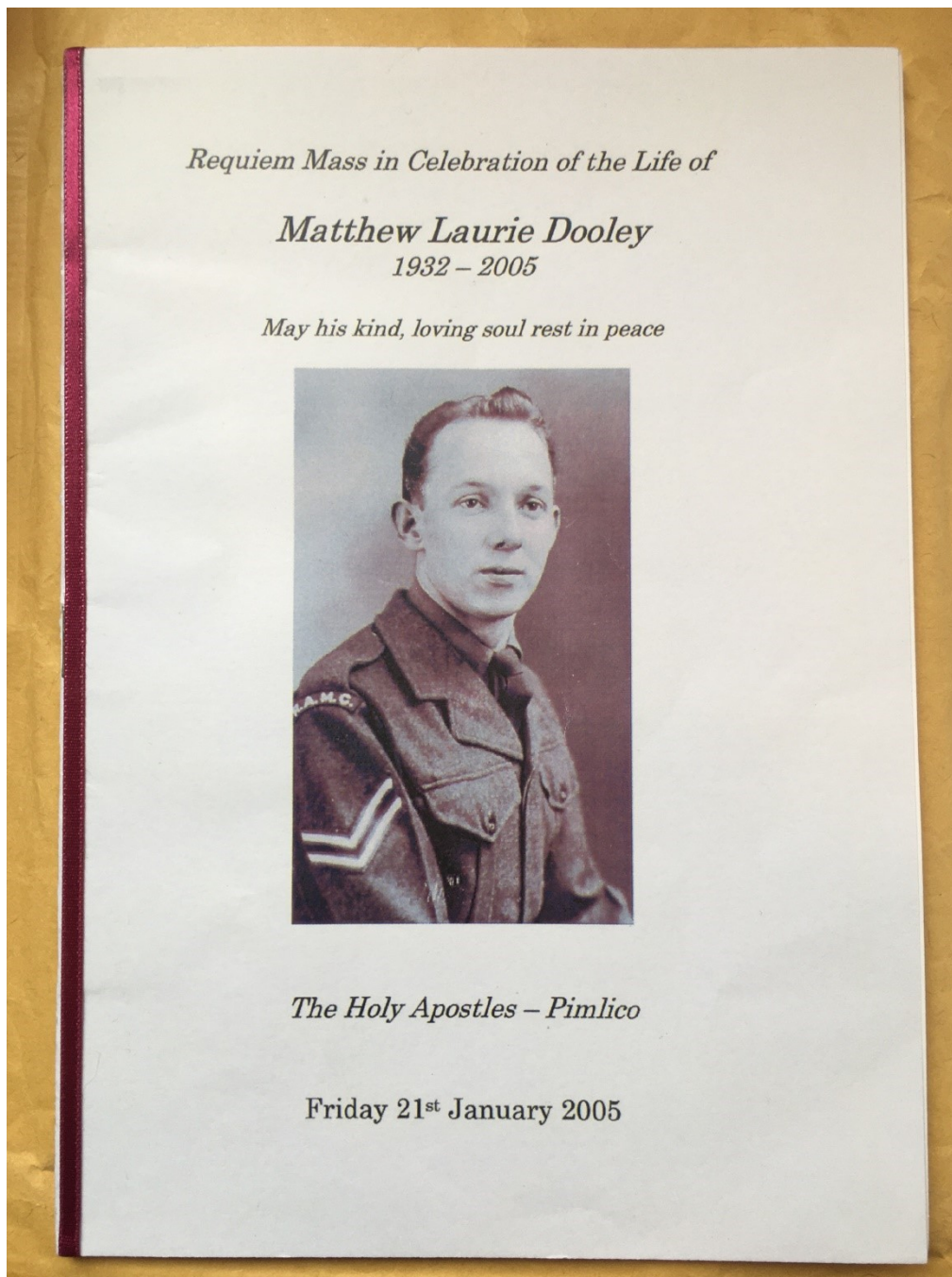


HQ Mess, Army Medical Services (view from Embankment)

¹ Brigadier Finnegan's last post in service (2006) was as Director Army Primary Healthcare Service

² This May 1945 article 'The Rod and the Serpent and other Badges' remains as relevant and interesting today as when published, with its fascinating explanations of the symbols on Army badges, including that of the RAMC. It is particularly recommended to medical students and newly qualified doctors embarking on a military medical career. To give you a flavour, it mentions that Aesculapius (worshipped as the god of healing) was adopted by the Romans during the plague of 293 BC. It was quite a family affair: his wife Epione was a soother, their son Telephorus was the god of recovery, and two of their daughters were Hygeia and Panacea - all handy to have around in an epidemic. See <https://militaryhealth.bmj.com/content/jramc/84/5/227.full.pdf> Poston RI. The Rod and the Serpent and other Badges. *J Roy Army Med Corps* 1945;84:227-229

Requiem Mass

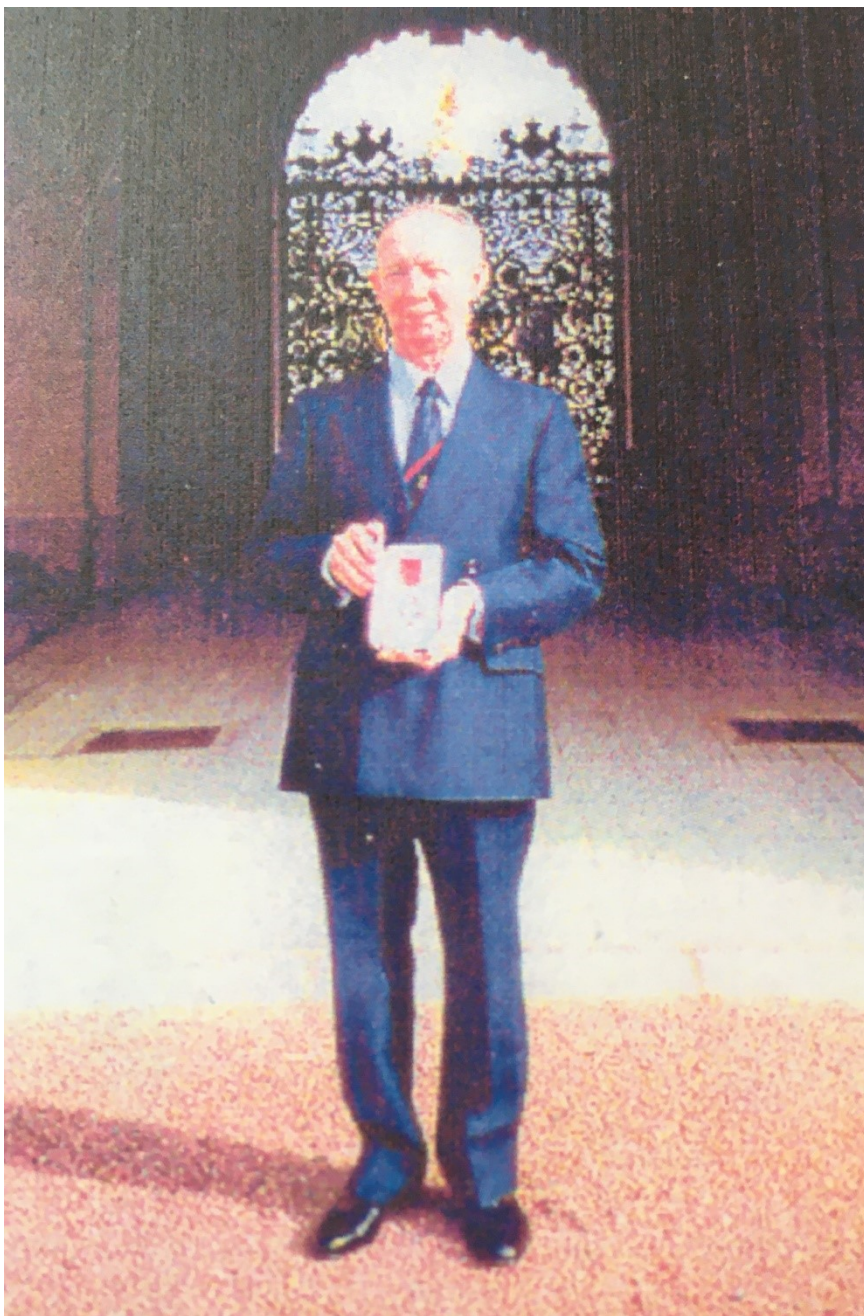


A mark of the esteem in which Mr Dooley was held is that his Requiem Mass was attended by the Surgeon General and most of the senior officers of the Army Medical Services, including at least eleven of one star level and above and fourteen of staff rank.

His nephew, Philip Wark, read the first Reading (from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians 4:13-18), and Cannon Pat Browne read the Gospel (John 14:1-7).

Colonel Frank Tredget delivered his eulogy.

(Valerie Abraham, personal recollection).



Award of MBE, Queen's Birthday Honours 12 June 1998, for services as Head Waiter

In memory of Mr Matthew Dooley MBE