

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

14306 Warrant Officer Class One Warren Cottee

(15 March 1939 – 2006)

**Adapted By Peter Bruce, OAM
From a Eulogy by Colonel Arthur Burke, OAM**

Born in Lismore, in New South Wales, Warren enlisted as a 17-year-old private in 1959 and separated from the Army 21 years later as the 1st Divisional Artillery Sergeant Major, the senior Artillery soldier in Australia's 1st Division. During those 21 years he had held every rank in between including appointments as a battery sergeant major and a regimental sergeant major. His base trade was signaller, and he had excelled in this trade both as a practitioner and as an instructor.

Warrant Officer Class One Cottee had been blooded by two active service tours. His first overseas tour was as a young soldier with 101st Battery in Malaya during 1959 until 1961. He was later to serve in Vietnam as a sergeant with 105th Battery from the 14th of September 1965 until his return to Australia on the 23rd of September 1966.

In retirement from full-time service, Warren displayed a remarkable loyalty to his two active service battery associations. Despite months of chemotherapy and a quite weakened constitution, he was at the 105th reunion on Bribie Island in October 2005 chatting with all his active service and other service mates.

His postings included Artillery Instructor at the Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon in 1971. Brigadier Gerry Warner, a staff cadet at the time, said of Warren *'He taught us so much about our future tribe.'*

Warren was posted as Battery Sergeant Major in 1st Field Regiment at Wacol in Brisbane in the early 1970s and his Commanding Officer, Colonel Don Quinn said of Warren, *'He got his job done with a minimum of fuss.'*

During 1977/1978, Warren was posted as Regimental Sergeant Major of 4th Field Regiment in Townsville. His commanding officer at the time was David Gilroy and the later Brigadier Gilroy said of Warren, *'He had a vice-like grip on the senior NCOs within the unit.'*

Warren's sporting fortes were cricket and rugby, but he would have a go at any sport and succeed well. He consistently played in the unit A teams for cricket and rugby against civilians and military opponents and even had a crack at the Kiwis when over in New Zealand on exchange. In 1965 he welded the very dispirited Headquarters Battery sports teams of 4th Field Regiment into a winning force. Another three brief accolades come from other members of the Royal Regiment for his sporting prowess:

- Lieutenant Colonel Jock Jenvey, Warren's troop commander in Malaya: *'He certainly earned his place in the battery's teams when we went to Singapore to play against the Brits.'*
- Brigadier David Gilroy: *'Warren Cottee was a fine cricketer', and*
- Colonel Don Quinn: *'He was a high quality sportsman.'*

Warren always had a quiet approach, but an intent that could shatter glass and could chill one to the bone if he was not pleased with your performance. He was unflappable and never panicked, no matter how drastic the situation became. Warren was refined. As comfortably as he held court in the Sergeants' Mess, he would have fitted in equally as well at the brigadier's cocktail party or at a Government House function.

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Again, quotations emphasise these attributes:

- Colonel Quinn: *'Cottee was a real gentleman.'*
- Brigadier Gilroy: *'He had the loyalty and very high respect of all members in the unit.'*
- Colonel Arthur Burke: *'When I visited Warren five days before he left us, he was so humbled by all the phone calls and visitors he was receiving. We laughed and joked about Army life for 1.5 hours and not once did he have a harsh word for anyone.'*

Warrant Officer Class One Warren Cottee was a truly professional Gunner, above par sportsman and one of nature's gentlemen. To echo the words of his Vietnam Battery Captain, Lieutenant Colonel Bruce Stark: *'He was one of the finest soldiers I have ever known'*.

Acknowledgements:

- Colonel Arthur Burke, OAM who gave the Eulogy at Warrens funeral and gathered the quotations used.