

106 Field Workshop Recollections

Coopers Plains & Enoggera

I was posted to 106 Field Workshop from 1989 to 1993, which encompassed some of the time the unit was located at Coopers Plains and also the move of the unit to Enoggera. The unit also celebrated its 21st anniversary in my first year there and held a function at the Borlace Club at Coopers Plains. This posting also included the disbandment of 106 Field Workshop in March 1993, when it became Workshop Company 6 BASB.

I was employed as a RAEME Clerk Admin and was posted to the Orderly Room as a digger at Coopers Plains and then as the Orderly Room CPL when the unit moved to Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera.

Coopers Plains

106 Field Workshop occupied Damour Barracks at Coopers Plains on the corner of Boundary and Orange Grove Roads for a period of ten years from May 1981 until May 1991 when the unit moved permanently to Enoggera. At that time 106 Field Workshop was part of the 1st Division providing support to 1 Div units that included the 6th Brigade. Damour Barracks was a large area of approximately 24 hectares and comprised mainly of buildings built by the Americans during WWII. Of particular note were the half a dozen large 'igloo' buildings that comprised the main workshop facilities. These housed the Q Store, RPS, EIR, GE, Vehicle and Recovery and covered approximately half the site of Damour Barracks. The other half comprised the HQ and administration buildings and included:

- an RAP
- Officer's Mess
- SGTs Mess
- OR's mess and kitchen
- the Borlace Club
- ORs accommodation and ablutions
- two former Married Quarters that also served as OR accommodation
- Tennis Court, and
- Full size AFL/Cricket field.

There was also a guard hut that served as an entry point to the workshop area as there was a dividing fence between the large igloo buildings and the HQ and admin area that basically divided the barracks in two. 106 Field Workshop maintained its own duty roster and the guard hut was manned after hours by a Duty Officer, Duty Driver and piquet. There were also two further buildings that housed C Coy 9 RQR and a museum of sorts, although the C Coy building burned down some time in 1990. I thought 106 Field Workshop was unique as it had a large barracks for one unit and maintained three separate messes for the various ranks, with the bars staffed by diggers from the unit on a roster system.

As well as the facilities described previously, 106 Field Workshop also maintained a Forward Repair Group permanently based at Gallipoli Barracks Enoggera to provide field support to Enoggera based unit.

The Federal government decided to sell off the land and Coopers Plains and this necessitated moving the unit to Gallipoli Barracks at Enoggera. Construction commenced and in May 1991 the unit moved into a brand new facility at Enoggera, which also consolidated the FRG into the unit compound. Whilst the facilities were excellent and being located with the vast majority of customer units made strategic sense, the loss of the location at Damour Barracks did have an impact on the unit and it was as if we were leaving one era and moving onto the next. A massive party was held at Damour Barracks prior to the unit leaving and the Borlace Club was well attended and the party did not finish up until dawn. Some of the Borlace Club was (allegedly) used to keep the bonfire going during the night whilst the bar was emptied.

A matter of priority was the construction of a replacement Borlace Club at the new unit location at Gallipoli. This is well covered in the article in the RAEME Craftsman that is referenced on the 106 Field Workshop website. Whilst it was being constructed the Bar consisted of a couple of trestle tables and the fridges from Cooper Plains housed in a shipping container. Close observers may note the current Borlace Club brickwork bares close similarity to the OR's accommodation at Enoggera that was built around the same time (apparently the builders had a spare couple of pallets of bricks!). I was involved in the construction of the new Borlace Club under the supervision of WO2 George Tranter from EIR, along with many unit members, and at the time of opening there was a brass plaque placed on the wall acknowledging those unit members who helped to build it. The club quickly gained a reputation for some fairly loud and expansive functions during the first year of opening, before the committee realised that what was OK at Coopers Plains was not OK at Enoggera.

The unit matured during its time at Enoggera and became more professional, task focussed and field ready, so the news that it was to be disbanded and form part of a new type of unit called the 6th Brigade Administrative Support Battalion was not popular. Other units that were also disbanded included 11 Field Ambulance, 5 Transport Squadron and 6 Field Supply Company. The unit was disbanded and became Workshop Company 6 BASB on 20 March 1993 and I posted out at the end of that year.

The following were Officers Commanding during my time with the unit:

MAJ P. Green

MAJ K. Alexander; and

MAJ T. Regener.

The ASMs were WO1 Phil Peers and WO1 Phil(?) Weber.

I thoroughly enjoyed my posting to 106 Field Workshop and had many fun times and made lifelong friends that I am still in contact with today, both current and ex-serving. I am still currently serving in the Army and am posted as the RSM of the Australian Army Psychology Corps.

Iain Lewington

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT BY ANON.

On 1 May 81, 106 Fd Wksp was raised and 1 Mdm Wksp disbanded with this event, there are now three field workshops in the division for the first time since Vietnam. The stimulus for re-raising 106 Fd Wksp was, of course, the ODF. A Logistic Support Group was formed to support the ODF. A Fd Wksp LSG was necessary to support the LSG. 106 Fd Wksp is the main "donor" unit from which personnel and equipment are shadow-posted/earmarked for the Fd Wksp LSG.

TWO ROLES

As the roles, organisation and operating procedures of the two field workshops (106 and LSG) are completely different, different requirements exist depending on which "hat" is worn. All EMEIs and RPs and most publications are duplicated. There are two different sets of SOPs and Standing Orders. Medically, FE is required for 106 and CZE for the LSG. There are 126 pers in 106 and 71 in the LSG workshop. Some equipment is exclusive to 106, some exclusive to the LSG and some "dual hatted". The LSG Wksp performs unit repairs for its dependants, whereas 106 does not. When the LSG workshop deploys it has a repair parts section but no repair parts for its dependency. Confused? The dual hatted role does cause some problems, but these are being overcome gradually.

DAMOUR BARRACKS

106 Fd Wksp is located at Damour Barracks, Coopers Plains, Brisbane. As our dependency is at Enoggera on the other side of the city, an FRG has been established there to provide close support to 6 Bde and 1 Div units. At Damour Barracks, the unit runs its own Officers, Sergeants and Soldiers Messes. As unit messes appear to be a thing of the past, the current situation is looked upon with envy by other units in Enoggera with shared messes. Between about 20 and 30 soldiers live in at Coopers Plains. Apart from a det of 11 Sup Bn and an ARES Platoon, 106 Fd Wksp has the sole occupancy of Damour Barracks. In spite of the fact that the buildings and accommodation are rundown and maintenance a continual problem, a considerable amount of self-help has created comfortable living conditions and facilities. The news that the unit was not to be relocated into the Enoggera sprawl for several years was greeted with cheers.

FIRST SIX MONTHS

In the first six months after it was raised, the workshop grew from 60 to 126 personnel. At the same time, 1 Mdm Wksp procedures were being changed to those of an LSG and a divisional field workshop. Two major exercises, Platypus and K81 were held in this period and the workshop performed creditably.

About this time "Maggot" appeared. Maggot was a pig. A little pig — then a big pig. He was adopted by the Wksp. He fetched tools. He went on clearing patrols as a forward scout. He bailed up strangers. Dressed in a white shirt and bow-tie, he was guest of honour at a Sgt Mess dinner. He refused slops. He lined up in the mess queue with the rest of the workshop. He slept in soldiers' beds. He ate soldiers' webbing. He grew bigger. He attended OC Conferences. He grew too big for his trotters. The chaplain took him away.

6 BDE

In 1982, the unit conducted its first unit exercise in the 106 Fd Wksp role. In Jul/Aug 82, an FRG was provided for the 6 Bde Ex Diamond Dollar. The FRG was due to deploy on a Wednesday. On the previous Friday word was received about the M113 fleet being grounded with steering differential problems. On Sunday, the FRG was called to the rescue. With a lot of running around by duty staff, the FRG was duly warned, and rolled off to the rescue before 1000 hrs on the Monday, bound for Shoalwater Bay

Training Area (SWBTA). All FRG personnel, whether clerks radio mechs or cooks, became honorary VM for the week and participated in the hastily but efficiently organised assembly line. By Friday morning all 92 M113 had been inspected and modified where necessary. This performance allowed the exercise to start on time and earned a deserved "Well Done".

LSG ROLE

A week after Diamond Dollar, the unit received the Warning Order for the LSG Workshop to deploy by air and sea. Ex Steady Pack was a test of the 28 days operational readiness requirement for the Fd Wksp LSG. At the end of the 28 days, a team from HQ 1 LSG visited and evaluated the unit's equipment and personnel readiness and movement preparation. The workshop passed with flying colours. The Fd Wksp LSG then deployed to Wide Bay Training Area, and utilising remnants of 106 Fd Wksp as a control organisation, exercised for the first time in the LSG role on Exercise Spanner One. During this six-week period an FRG from 101 Fd Wksp was deployed to Enoggera to support 6 Bde and 1 Div units.

COMMONWEALTH GAMES

The day after returning from Ex Spanner One, the unit was supplying personnel for the Commonwealth Games. Damour Barracks' population soared to over 600 with the formation of the Games Family Transport and Logistics Company. The only side benefits of the Games was the procurement of a carriage (formerly the stage for Rolf Harris) for the RTF train.

1983 EXERCISES

After 1982, the events of 1983 have been a letdown. Apart from detachments on unit exercises, Ex Wet One and Ex Northern Search, exercise activity has been minimal. The unit deployment exercise was cut short when Wide Bay Training Area was closed due to rain. Unit training was largely attendance at the BE course at LWC Canungra and Driver Training. Exercise Diamond Dollar 83 has been the highlight of the year. The theme of the exercise was the withdrawal. An FRG was provided in support of the Brigade in a BAA. The MRG was located in a simulated Divisional Maintenance Area (DMA), under a HQ provided by 1 Div. During the withdrawal several night deployments occurred involving both the FRG and MRG. Eventually the FRG moved into the MRG location. It was an interesting exercise, in that the FRG/MRG operations are often talked about, but seldom practised for major exercises. Many lessons were learnt. HQ 1 Div EME provided an EME Forward Control with the Recovery Platoon under command. The group provided route clearance during the withdrawal and recovery support for a reserved demolition. The exercise was of considerable value due to the attempt by the brigade to practise doctrine. The workshop was under command of divisional organisation, the FRG was under command of the unit, but in support and under command for movement of the brigade. The logistic system employed was that for a brigade operating in a divisional setting.

SPORT

In 1982 the unit fielded a touch football and a cricket team. Although it was only the first year of sport for the unit, both teams did well. 1983 saw the emergence of Rugby Union, Squash and a Soccer team. All teams are up in the placegetters area of the ladders so far and the next few weeks should see some results. For a small unit compared with other competitors, the participation in sport has been exceptional — as have the results.

Fresh from exercises and the Commonwealth Games, the unit can put together a team for the SE Qld Minor Units Athletics Competition and came a gallant second to the Div Locating Battery.

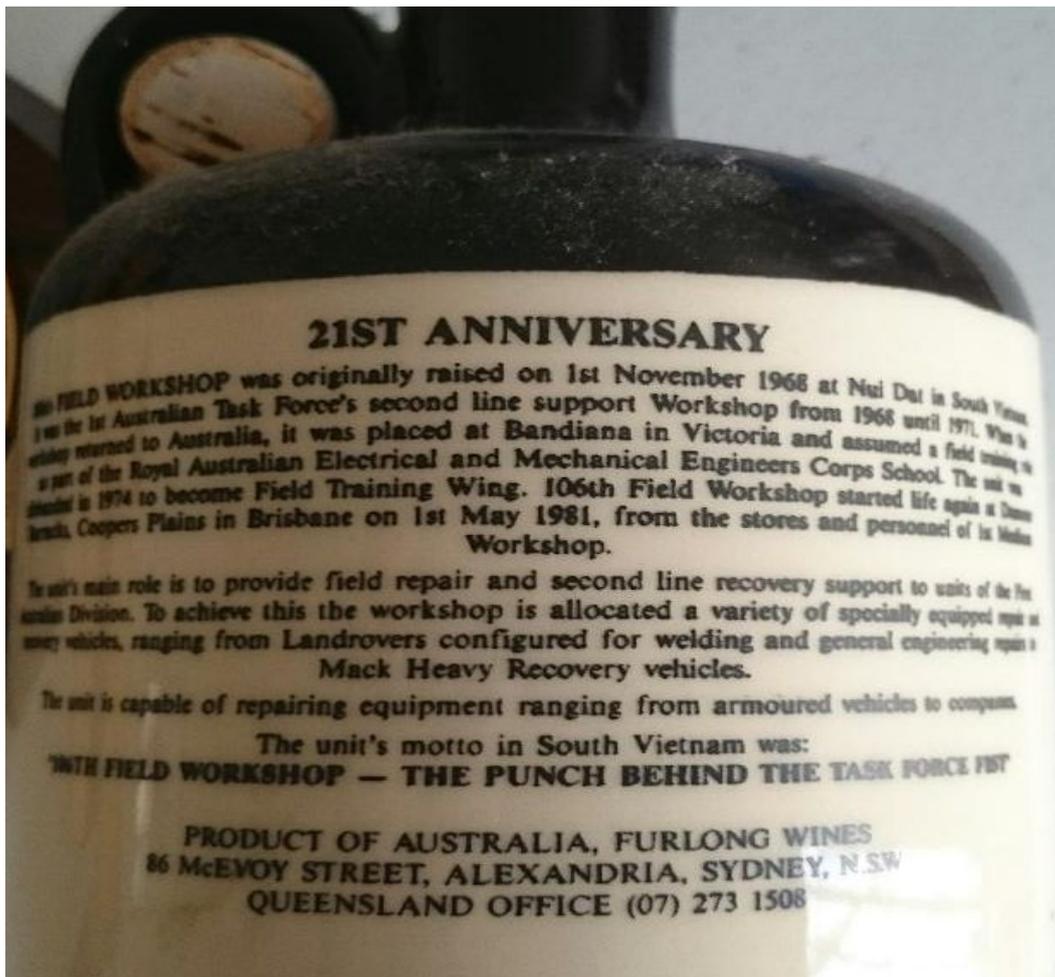
106TH FIELD WORKSHOP



THE
WORKHORSE

PRESENTED TO
CPL I J LEWINGTON
SOCIAL MEMBER
ON FORMATION OF 6 BASB
20 MAR 93





Transcription: "106th FIELD WORKSHOP was originally raised on 1st November 1968 at Nui Dat in South Vietnam. It was the 1st Australian Task Force's second line support Workshop from 1968 until 1971. When it '...?' returned to Australia, it was placed at Bandiana in Victoria and assumed a field training '...?' as part of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers Corps School. The unit was disbanded in 1974 to become Field Training Wing. 106th Field Workshop started life again at Damour Barracks, Coopers Plains in Brisbane on 1st May 1981, from the stores and personnel of 1st Medium Workshop.

The unit's main role is to provide field repair and second line recovery support to units of the '...?' Division. To achieve this the workshop is allocated a variety of specially equipped repair and recovery vehicles, ranging from Land Rovers configured for welding and general engineering repairs to Mack Heavy Recovery vehicles. The unit is capable of repairing equipment ranging from armoured vehicles to computers. The unit's motto in South Vietnam was:

106 FIELD WORKSHOP – THE PUNCH BEHIND THE TASK FORCE FIST."

