

## Old Court House - Wollongong Harbour

Members may have read in the Illawarra Mercury that the Sea Cadets are to be relocated from the old Court House at Belmore Basin. For some years, the National Trust Illawarra Branch has been concerned that use of the building by the Cadets is inappropriate. The Trust approached the Lord Mayor, David Campbell, seeking the support of Council in finding more suitable accommodation for the Cadets. A community committee was established and Frank Osborne has represented the Society.

After much hard work, plans are well under way to relocate the Cadets to a site adjacent to the Illawarra yacht Club building at Berkeley. The move is attractive to the Cadets as it means greater opportunities to sail in an open area rather than the confined space of Wollongong Harbour. The Cadets and the Naval Association of Illawarra are attempting to raise funds to erect new headquarters.

This will not be the first time that the Cadets have moved their meeting place. Establishment of the Cadet Unit was approved in September 1946 and for three months commencing 9 April 1947, meetings were held in the Agricultural Hall at the Wollongong Showground. With eleven initial cadets, the Unit operated as "N.L.T.D. Beatty".

From 10 July 1947, the Unit shared unoccupied space in the Old Court House, then known as the Drill Hall. The long-term occupant of the hall was the Army. Determined to have their own meeting place, the Cadets began fund raising. In 1953, a start was made by laying the piers and erecting the timber

framework. As funds were raised, weatherboards were attached.

In March 1956, the unfinished building was demolished in a gale. An appeal to local businesses attracted sufficient assistance to erect a new building which was occupied in November 1956. Formal commissioning of the Unit as TS Albatross occurred in January 1957. Changes in the Naval regulations in 1974 required Naval Reserve Cadet units to be housed in buildings on Crown land held by the Department of Defence. As the old Court House was no longer in use by the Army, the Unit moved back.

The Unit will relocate as soon as a suitable building can be erected on the Lake Illawarra site. In the meantime, the Old Court House Committee has begun planning for the future use of the building. Several subcommittees have been established to survey the needs of potential users, develop a business plan and identify restoration works.

John Shipp

9.9.94