

Illuminating Albury's Streets

Joe Wooding

The Borough Council, on June 9, 1866 called tenders for a Lamp Lighter to service the twelve lamps being installed. Locations were not provided.

Specifications included:

“Contractor to light the lamps with the best kerosene oil and wicks. The same provided by contractor. The lamps be lighted every evening at dusk, except when the moon rises before 7pm and kept burning until 1 o'clock next morning, except on full moonlight nights, when the lamps may be extinguished as soon as the moon rises.”

Replies received from Mr L Morton for £200 and Scotty Campbell for £106/10 did not impress Council, who called new tenders.

On June 30, William Green's submission of £90 was accepted, he becoming our first lamplighter. Alas, seven days later he found the wicks needed were larger than foreseen and withdrew from his contract.



A Sugg lamp in the centre of the Dean and Kiewa Street intersection, looking west, circa 1900

In September, tenders were again called, this time Council to supply oil etc. There were no takers and moonlight bathed the Albury streets for the next eight months. In February 1867, Mr O'Sullivan surfaced, temporarily. His deal was to provide kerosene at 6 shillings and 3 pence a gallon and light the lamps for the next four months at 14 shillings per week. Yet more trouble - lamps were constantly being blown out. In June 1867, Council removed all lamps in an effort to rectify their ventilation problems.

Eventually, Mr Frank Fleiner became Lamp Lighter and a glint of light could be seen on a few Albury street corners from 1870.

In May 1883, Council imposed a lighting levy of 2 pence in the pound on rate payers, resolving to light the lamps with gas. This was amended to gas or kerosene, a situation which remained until 1916, when electricity was introduced.

In 1891, Council were paying £7/10 per gas lamp per annum, when they introduced a “powerful” 150 candlepower Sugg Lamp at the intersection of Dean and Kiewa Street, costing 6 times more to run. Light intensity is measured in lumens, 150 candlepower gives 1,885 lumens, while a 150 watt incandescent lamp in comparison provides 2,600 lumens.

Subsequently, Suggs were added to both Olive and Townsend Street corners. By 1906, there were 48 gas lamps, kerosene numbers are unknown.