The town of light

In_Reefton_Township_on_August_1888,_about_12_years_after_the_discovery_of_gold_in_the_area_had_brought_about_a_population,_wealth_and_technological_boom,_street_lighting_was_switched_on_for_the_first_time.

By "switching on", Reefton had not only beaten the rest of New Zealand to this luxury they had beaten the fashionable suburbs of London and New York and become the first town in the Southern Hemisphere to have a street lighting system.

In 1888 a young gentleman named Walter Prince arrived in the town with his small electric generator in tow and held public demonstrations of its use. These demonstrations amazed the public and sparked the locals to form a company and build the Reefton Power Station.

The Reefton power station became the source of the first municipal power supply in the Southern Hemisphere supplying electricity to the booming town of Reefton for over 60 years before being decommissioned in 1948 when the town was connected to the national grid. The station was a hydro scheme generating electricity through the steady supply of water from the nearby Inangahua River. Parts of the original Reefton hydro power station are still there today and can be reached via walking tracks.

Learn more about Reefton's history here...