

Mystery Lights Probably Aurora

Seaspray Resident Notifies Police

The mystery of "flares and lights" seen off the coast between Port Albert and Seaspray during the past week, and again on Saturday night, is believed to have been solved. They were almost certainly one of nature's phenomena, Aurora Australis, better known as the Southern Lights.

The Aurora is at its brightest on clear winter nights, and can vary from a white beam, like a searchlight, to small colored flashes.

The latest report of the light came from Seaspray, where several residents for several hours on Saturday night watched a beam like a searchlight flashing

on and off.

Frederick Gooding, a Seaspray farmer, who was the first to notice it, said: "About 8.30 p.m. I saw a strange light in the sky. It looked as though it was well out to sea."

"It would suddenly flash on, cover a 180-deg. arc, and then disappear. This continued at intervals of a few minutes until I went to bed at 11 p.m."

Soon after he noticed the light Mr. Gooding telephoned Sale police and his friend, Max Rowley, Seaspray postmaster and an ex-serviceman.

"With my wife I watched the light for some time," Mr. Rowley said last night.

"It looked just like a searchlight flickering on and off out to sea. I watched it for about half an hour, and noticed that it appeared to be moving further to the east, toward Lakes Entrance.

Sale police checked with the R.A.A.F. and navy, and were told that no aeroplane or vessel

told that no aeroplane or vessel was in the area at the time.

Earlier in the week white and colored "flares" were seen coming from the sea off Port Albert. They were taken for distress signals, but a thorough search of the area by local fish-

ermen quickly convinced them that the flares were different from those used by boats which fished their waters.

Some thought they were being fired from a foreign submarine; others that they were signals from smugglers to a shore party.

Each time lights were seen the night was cold and visibility good.

The secretary of the Victorian Astronomical Society (Mr. A. W. Walker), questioned about the lights, said they were probably the Aurora Australis.

"The Aurora frequently takes the form of white beams like searchlights, though it can appear to be like smaller colored lights," he said.

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"It is usually at its brightest on cold, clear, winter nights."

Mr. Walker explained that the Aurora was caused by electrical particles thrown out by sunspots, being attracted to the South Pole.

"Just recently several sunspots have been reported," he added.
