

Mystery solved

Burnie's "flying saucer" mystery has been solved.

The "saucer," seen by many Stowport and Natone residents late on Tuesday evening, has been positively identified as a gigantic flock of starlings performing "gymnastics" in the air on their way along the Coast to roost after a day of searching for foods on hinterland farms.

Several further reports of having seen the saucer came in to "The Advocate" yesterday from Stowport and Natone people, with vivid descriptions of its gyrations.

Then the "bubble burst". At 9 p.m. came a 'phone call from Mr. P. F. Norton, of Stowport, for the news editor. He opened with the amazing statement, "I can solve the flying 'saucer' riddle for you." And then he laughed. "One of my sons and I saw the 'saucer' and watched it for ten minutes or so," he said.

"It was the largest flock of birds I have ever seen, and they put on an amazing performance. There were thousands of them, and they flew wingtip to wingtip, forming a seemingly solid mass.

"For ten minutes or more they zoomed about the sky. At times the birds

the sky. At times the birds at the top of the flight would fan out, while those below would pack into a tight mass, forming a huge mushroom in the sky. Then they would mass together again in the form of a giant top and go wheeling almost straight up in the air.

"In the fading light and against the grey background of low clouds they made an eerie sight, and it was only when they passed only a few hundred feet overhead that we could see they were birds."

Mr. Norton said that from any distance it was impossible to identify the mass as birds, and he could well imagine anyone thinking they were a "flying saucer".

When this story was referred to an old resident of Wynyard who makes a study of the habits of birds, he said that every evening huge flocks of starlings, which had their roosts in ti-tree scrub on the western side of Table Cape, blackened the sky in the area as they came home for the night. There was a similar sight in the early morning, when the birds set out to forage for

birds set out to forage for food.

He considered it more than likely that the "flying saucer" seen by John Howarth, of Sulphur Creek, was also a flock of these birds, the queer lighting effect being provided by the "false" dawn being reflected from the sheen of their feathers.