

WHIRLWIND HITS SECTION OF TOWN

TILES FLY FROM ROOF IN NEW PLYMOUTH

BY what can be little else than a miracle no person was injured when a whirlwind struck through a narrow section of central New Plymouth yesterday, stripped slate tiles off the roof of a building and sent them flying into Devon Street and upset stacks of timber at the rear of a furniture manufacturer's factory.

The occurrence took place at about 5.15 yesterday afternoon, and probably on account of the heavy rain at that time fewer people than usual were about on a Friday.

The area affected was a narrow strip of the town a little to the west of the post office. The building involved was a large two-storey erection on what is known as the Shuttleworth estate. It is occupied on the ground floor by the district nurse's rooms, an office of the Central Dairy Ltd. and the St. John Ambulance, who also use the upper storey.

It is a high building with a gable roof covered with slate tiles. It was some of these that were stripped from the eastern side of the roof and deposited on the vacant section beside the building and out on to Devon Street where motors were parked and as several cyclists were passing. The slates are about 18 inches long by nine inches wide, and are very heavy.

Broken fragments were scattered all about the locality and one tile was found as far away as the back yard of a house on the seaward side of Powderham Street, at the rear of the Catholic Presbytery.

CLOSED DOORS SAVE ROOF.

At the rear of the damaged building Mr. J. T. Rogers has part of his furniture factory and he told a Taranaki Herald reporter to-day that if the double doors at the back of his place had not been closed he was sure the wind would have carried the roof away.

He was working with three members of his staff when they heard a noise which seemed like the roar of a motor starting up. Before they were aware of what it was the whole building was trembling and they could see the roof moving with the force of the wind. They then heard the sound of the tiles being torn from the roof of the big building and falling about in broken pieces.

At the rear of his premises Mr. Rogers

had some stacks of timber. One of these, which was wired down, was twisted and turned off its base bodily. From another, long loose boards of 12 x 1 material were scattered about the yard.

Small poplar trees at the King Street side of the section were said to have been twisted round like corkscrews. There are some other very old buildings on parts of the property, and while some odd pieces of roof were torn away they suffered nothing worse.

MOTOR VAN LIFTED.

"It seemed like a minute or two," said Mr. Rogers, "but I suppose it was only a matter of seconds."

He stated that a half-ton motor van which was parked in Devon Street in front of his place was lifted bodily off the ground and landed several feet behind its original parking place. Cyclists were also blown off machines.

ACROSS THE STREET.

The wind ripped foliage and light branches from trees in the locality and the grounds of the Catholic Presbytery on the opposite side of Devon Street, were littered with such debris.

"We certainly felt it," said Father R. J. Minogue, "and the old place rocked as if in an earthquake, but it did us no damage."

He said they heard a noise which sounded like a whistle and then the wind hit them. "We got a fright for a moment," he added, "but it was all over quickly."

In the convent, which adjoins the presbytery and St. Joseph's Church the effect was less apparent, indicating that the wind took in a very narrow strip and vertically. All that the occupants of that very tall building observed was the simultaneous banging of several inside doors.