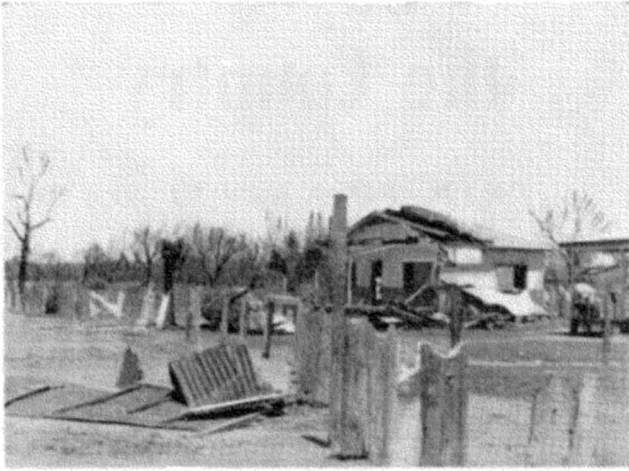


WHIRLWIND LASHES

WALGETT



A terrible 12-minute long storm caused more than £10,000 worth of damage recently among homes at the Walgett aboriginal station.

In the 12 minutes, while violent winds crashed through the settlement, 150 points of rain fell, and hail lay six inches deep in places.

Trees were stripped bare, and wreckage blown up to three-quarters of a mile by the storm winds.

The 160 people living on the station had an amazing escape from injury.

Emergency relief measures were taken immediately by the station manager, Mr. C. Mason, and in close collaboration with him, by the Aborigines Welfare Board and the Civil Defence authorities in Sydney.

Fifteen lavatories that had been completed only the week before were reduced to rubble.

Describing the storm, Mr. Mason said: "In a matter of minutes, the sky blackened, thunder roared, lightning flashed and ferocious winds and whirlwinds brought hail and rain which lashed the station for about 12 minutes.

"Trees were stripped of all vegetation and what had been gardens were reduced to plain earth.

"Limbs were blown off trees, and at the administration block, power lines were severed and a post carrying the power lines was snapped off at ground level," he said.

Only slight damage, mostly broken glass, was done to the manager's residence, to the school and to the school teacher's residence.

The residences on the station, however, took the full force of the storm.

Debris from the homes was scattered over half a mile, while sheets of iron were picked up and hurled three-quarters of a mile away.

In all, four homes were damaged beyond repair and varying degrees of damage was done to most of the other homes on the station.

Within 48 hours, men of the Department of Public Works were on the job, and the long task of repair had begun.

* PICTURES show the severe damage done to homes, and debris littering the ground, after the big "blow" at Walgett.

