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Plant may send spire toppling

FEW of the people who attend services at Grahamstown's historical Methodist Commemoration Church know that one of the five spires which top the old building is in danger of being destroyed — by a plant.

The plant, a wild fig which takes root in any foreign substance and grows without soil, is slowly sending its long, leaf-tipped shoots along the delicate cement-work of the spire.

The plant, which is growing on the spire almost directly above

the spire and send it toppling to the ground.

When Mr. Jim Mullins, a Rhodesian soil conservation officer was in Grahamstown two years ago, he noticed a wild fig growing in the same place. He reported it to the authorities, who had the plant removed.

The Rev. C. W. Moore, minister of the church, told me that the new plant must have grown from a root left behind. He said that steps were being taken to have the plant removed before any damage, or injury to people, was done.

The Curator of Parks in Grahamstown, Mr. Royal Fugard, said the wind was probably responsible for the plant appearing in such an odd place.

He said that another wild fig was growing on the Salvation Army building in High Street. "These plants have been known to crack through a block of granite," he said.

Its roots were considerably more powerful than the root of an ordinary bean which, when germinating, pushed through soil with a pressure of 25,000 lb. per square inch.

The Methodist Church is one of the oldest in Grahamstown. Generations of Kingswood College pupils who have attended Sunday services in the beautiful building have left their marks in the gallery, where scores of initials have been carved into the woodwork by the boys.



the entrance of the church, can be seen from the street. Fears are being expressed here that the powerful roots may crack