Hunted man may have slipped net

by Richard Simpson

An armed man, hunted by police in remote hills near Bala seems to have slipped through the police dragnet.

Last night 30 police officers, many of them armed, were carrying out another search of the hills above Llyn Celyn, for the man who tried to take a sub-postmaster hostage.

But a senior police officer at the scene confirmed there had been no sighting of the man since the armed robbery at Frongoch, near Bala, on Friday morning.

And as police closed down their incident room at Llyn Celyn at the end of the third day of an intensive search, speculation was growing that the man could be Richard Gambrell, who is wanted by neighbouring Dyfed-Powys police in connection with the murder of a farmer.

Inspector James Jon, who was leading the manhunt yesterday, said he had to keep an open mind on whether or not there was a connection between the two incidents.

He added: "Unless he was well-equipped for these mountains, he would be unlikely to survive the weather we've had over the last two nights."

The police manhunt began around Bala on Friday when an armed man robbed sub-postmaster John Hughes (42), who runs the village stores at Frongoch, of £1,000 in cash.

Mr Jones had to lock himself in his own car to avoid being taken hostage by the gunman.

His courage was later praised by senior police officers leading the hunt.

The gunman was last seen running towards the remote hillside wearing a dark-coloured donkey jacket.

A police spokesman added last night that unless sightings of the gunman had been reported by today, the intensive hunt which has been going on over the weekend would be called off.

Snow now caps the mountains around Llyn Celyn and Detective Chief Superintendent Gwyn Owen, head of North Wales CID, admitted at the beginning of the manhunt that if he had 1,000 officers at his disposal he would find it difficult to comb the whole area.

Heavily armed police officers were, however, still at Llyn Celyn last night. A man will appear in court today following a two-hour armed siege yesterday at a gun shop in the Old Bridge Street, Havercroft, No one was hurt, though several shots were fired as police surrounded the building.