**Beecroft Opium Haul**

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Friday 22 March 1918, page 5**

BEECROFT'S SECRET

Opium in the Hills

WHAT THE POLICE FOUND

Haul worth £600

After spending the whole of a night on guard in the bush in the vicinity of Beecroft and "beating" all over the mountainous country in that neighborhood, Detectives

Barclay and Thornley, Inspectors and Bradley, of the Customs Department, Constable McDonald, of Beecroft, and half a dozen searchers succeeded yesterday in finding £600 worth of opium cleverly hidden in a cave.

The find was made late in the afternoon when the parcel was located under a pile of rubbish in the corner of the cave, which Is about a mile from the township.

AN ALL-NIGHT VIGIL

The previous night Barclay and Thornley, as a result of information they had received, waited in the bush all night. They had heard that an attempt was to be made to shift the drug, but, although they were out for twelve hours, they saw nothing suspicious.

All the same they were satisfied that there was opium in the district, and consequently they organised yesterday's search. The men went out early in the afternoon, and after searching for about six hours they discovered what they were looking for.

SNAKES AND ADDERS

This followed a raid on a house at Beecroft. The place was overhauled but nothing was found. The men then went into the bush, and their work there was rendered tedious and hard because of the mountainous nature of the country.

There was also a suggestion of thrill about it, for the reason that the men were warned before they left that snakes and death adders abounded in the bush. Consequently, they moved about cautiously and several times there were false snake alarms.

The opium recovered weighed about 30lb., and was done up in tins and small capsules. Each of the latter contained about 10s worth of opium.

CUNNING CAPSULES

The capsules are about the size of a revolver-bullet, and have been cunningly contrived in order that they may be easily secreted about the body.

One end Is flattened down, and has a hole through it, and not the slightest trouble would be experienced in stringing hundreds of them together, and placing them about the body. They are so small that they would never be noticed, and, unless the person bringing them ashore were stripped, they would be missed by Customs searchers. The detectives and Customs officers are satisfied that they have secured only a portion of the opium that is hidden in the mountains around Beecroft, and consequently they are still beating the country, and looking into the caves, in the hope that they may find the remainder of it.

A DISTRIBUTING CENTRE

Apart from the specific information they had received regarding the opium, which is thought to have been landed within the past fortnight, the detectives and lite Customs officials have acquired knowledge which is likely to cause Beecroft and the surrounding country to receive close attention in the future.

There is good reason for believing that smugglers have used the hilly country around the township for many months— in fact that the district has been the distributing centre.

Large quantities of the drug are believed to have been taken there by motor car and hidden in the hills, until favorable opportunities occurred for taking it away.

Then it was done up into small parcels and brought into the agents in the city.

NO SUSPICION AROUSED

The distribution was carried out quietly and carefully, and not the slightest suspicion was aroused.

But now that the police and customs officers know that the hills constitute the smuggler's storehouse, and that the district probably also provides them with a hiding place, it will be carefully watched.

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Friday 22 March 1918, page 5**

MEN BEFORE THE COURT

TWO ADDITIONAL CHARGES

Opium in a Garden

At the Central Police Court this morning Hubert Campbell Powell, or Robert Campbell, 47, a fisherman, and James Law, 37, a motor car driver, appeared before Mr. Adrian, S.M., in connection with the alleged smuggling of opium at Balmain on the morning of March 14. The first charge against the two accused was that of having assembled of March 14, at Mort's Dock, for the purpose of smuggling opium from a steamer.

A second charge was that of conspiring together to commit an offence against the law, of the Commonwealth, namely, to Interfere, without authority, and otherwise than In accordance with the Customs Act, with certain goods subject to the control of the Customs, namely, opium.

A third charge was that Law and Powell, or Campbell, assaulted George Bradley, an officer within the meaning of the Customs Act, in the execution of his duty.

Mr. Ferguson, who appeared on behalf of the Commonwealth Government, applied for a remand till April 8, when the Crown would be ready to proceed. He opposed bail. He said that the grounds of the refusals to grant bail by the magistrate before whom the men were first brought, and later on by the Supreme Court were justified. Yesterday Customs and police officers had dug up in the garden of Law's sister, who lives at Beecroft, about £300 worth of opium, but the balance of £3000 worth was still missing.

Mr. E. R. Abigail, who appeared for Law and Mr. Coyle (instructed by Mr. Taylor), who was present for Powell or Campbell, opposed Mr. Ferguson's application, and pointed out that the men had a right to get bail.

There were further arguments, at the conclusion of which, the cases were adjourned till next Thursday, Bail was not allowed.

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Friday 22 March 1918, page 6**

THE OPIUM FIND

Opium worth £600, which is supposed to be portion of a large parcel smuggled into Sydney recently, was found hidden in a cave in the mountainous country near Beecroft yesterday. The larger photograph shows 35 of the capsules, which are constructed in such a manner as to render it easy for a smuggler to secrete a large number of them about his body. The inset is a picture of the whole of the opium recovered by the detectives and Customs officers yesterday.



**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Saturday 23 March 1918, page 3**

OPIUM IN THE HILLS

Searching near Beecroft

OLD PLANT DISCOVERED

Much Rough Country Covered

Although they searched the mountainous country around Beecroft for eight hours yesterday, and moved tons of rock, some of which weighed 5 cwt., rooted out logs,

dragged waterholes, and dug up all the soft ground they came across, police and Custom searchers failed to find any more of the opium they are convinced is hidden in the hills.

The search party was made up of Inspectors Donohoe and Bradley, of the Customs Department, Constables McDonald (Beecroft) Barclay (Eastwood), and Winnicott (Ryde), and ten experienced searchers from the Customs Department, and a large area of country was covered.

Difficulties of the Bush

Making the cave in which they found the opium on the previous day their starting-point, they worked over further to the north, through Beecroft Gully, which runs down to the railway station, and over the rugged, hilly country in the direction of the rifle-range.

They also covered some ground on the southern side of Copeland-street, Beecroft, and searched in the direction of Cheltenham. The ground over which the party moved was exceedingly rough, and the work was hard at every stage. At times the men were scaling miniature precipices, while at others the undergrowth was so thick that they had to crawl along.

A False Alarm

The search was a most complete one. Nothing was neglected. Every movable rock was rolled over, and in the course of the eight hours hunt the police dragged several small waterholes. They dug up and rolled over huge logs and every area of soft ground which looked as if it might have been recently dug was turned over. But no trace of the missing opium was found.

In the middle of the day the police thought they had made an important find, but it turned out to be only an old plant. Some of the men were going over the old ground, about 50 yards on the northern side of Copeland-road, when they came across a large flat rock on the side of the gully.

Help was obtained, and when the rook was turned over a hole about 2ft. 6in. square was revealed. It appeared to have been boarded-in at one time, and there were the remains of what had once been either a tin box or a kerosene tin inside.

The sides and bottom of the hole were dug out, but nothing further was found.

Search to be Continued

The hole is thought to have been a former plant of the smugglers, but apparently it was deemed to be too close to the roadway, and was abandoned. The cave where the opium was found on Thursday was about 100 yards further away in the hills.

Despite their failure and the wearying nature of the work, the police and Customs men intend continuing the search. They are not yet satisfied that they have found all the opium in the hills, and to-day they went out into the country again.

CAT OUT OF THE BAG

Yesterday's outing was not without its amusing side.

When a couple of hundred yards off the roadway one of the Customs searchers discovered a small patch of soft earth under a clump of bushes. He was suspicious immediately, and when he tested the ground with his steel probes it proved soft to a depth of about 3 feet. The probe, on being withdrawn, was moist and smellful, and on other searchers being secured the ground was dug up. About a ton of earth was shovelled out before a brown paper parcel was unearthed, and that was found to contain not opium, but, as one of the men put it, the "very dead body of a small animal, probably a cat."

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Saturday 23 March 1918, page 6**

All day yesterday the police and Customs officers, assisted by some local residents, searched the Beecroft countryside for opium, which is believed to be concealed in the neighbourhood.



**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate (Parramatta, NSW: 1888 - 1950), Saturday 30 March 1918, page 6**

Opium Plant at Beecroft.

The police made a raid on a house in Kirkland-road, Beecroft, in connection with the opium which was landed at Balmain on March. 14. Subsequently they visited some vacant land in Copeland-street, Beecroft, and in some very rough country found secreted among the rocks over £300 worth of opium.

**Maitland Daily Mercury (NSW: 1894 - 1939), Saturday 23 March 1918, page 2**

OPIUM IN A CAVE.

Near Beecroft.

After spending a whole night on guard in the bush in the vicinity of Beecroft, and searching throughout the next day, detectives and Customs officials have succeeded in finding £600 worth of opium, cleverly hidden in a cave. The find was due to information received to the effect that an attempt would be made to shift the drug, but although they watched for 12 hours, they saw nothing suspicious. Nevertheless, they were satisfied that there was opium in the district, and consequently organises a search, which was not without results. The opium recovered weighed about 30lbs, and was done up in tins. The detectives and Custom officials are convinced that they have only discovered portion of a large amount of the drug.

**Muswellbrook Chronicle (NSW: 1898 - 1955), Saturday 23 March 1918, page 7**

Latest Telegrams.

SYDNEY, Friday.

Detectives Barclay and Thornley, with several police, after a careful search of Beecroft district, found a cave with opium valued at £600 hidden away. They had much difficulty in finding a way through the dense undergrowth. Finally, a heap of dead fern leaves attracted their attention and proved to be the entrance to a cavity. It is believed that a good deal of opium is still hidden in the locality.

**Sun (Sydney, NSW: 1910 - 1954), Tuesday 16 April 1918, page 5**

SHOTS AT MOTOR CAR

THE OPIUM CHARGES

The hearing of evidence In connection with the opium cases, adjourned from last Tuesday, was continued before Mr. Smithers at the Central Police Court this morning.

Albert E. Greenfield, Customs official, gave evidence regarding watching motor car No. 21404 at Balmain early on the morning of March 14, and, with Constable Sherringham, firing at It in Mort-street when the driver would not pull up. He was unable to identify anyone in the car.

Constable Carroll said that Law was driving the car, which missed him by inches. He fired four shots at It. Constable Sherringham stated that he fired five shots at the motor car when it had passed him. He saw the number, 21404, on the car.

Inspector Donohoe, Customs Department, said that he searched a house of Mrs. Ah Quan, a sister of Law, at Beecroft. Certain stuff was discovered. Law admitted that Mrs. Ah Quan was his sister.

The charge against the two accused for assault was adjourned till Thursday. They were discharged on the other two charges.

**Singleton Argus (NSW: 1880 - 1954), Thursday 18 April 1918, page 3**

BALMAIN MOTOR SENSATION.

Opium Charges Dismissed.

The two men, James Law and Robert Campbell Powell, charged in connection with the sensational motor car chase at Balmain from Mort's Dock, were brought up at the Central Police Court on Tuesday. There were three charges against the accused—1st, of assembling together with the purpose of stealing opium; 2nd, with having conspired to commit an offence against the Customs Act; and 3rd, with having assaulted George Bradley while in the execution of his duty. Evidence was given that both the accused were in the car at which shots were fired by the police, and a Customs officer stated that Law admitted that Mrs. Quan, wife of a Chinaman, at Beecroft, near whose residence opium was found, was his sister. Law admitted that he owned the bullet marked car, but said he knew nothing of the shooting, having lent the vehicle to a man for a trial on the preceding day. The accused Powell stated that he was in bed when the affair took place. At the conclusion of the evidence, the magistrate said the case was one of grave suspicion, but there was no evidence to connect the accused with the opium. He had not the slightest doubt the accused were in the motor car on the morning of March 14. On the opium and conspiracy charges the accused were discharged. The charge of assault was adjourned to Thursday, the magistrate stating that he wished to look into the matter.