



### **I Was Saved By My Collar**

Elderly clergyman Dr Fred Fuller believes his dog collar saved him after a robber attacked him in his own home. Dr Fuller, 83, was held so tightly in an arm lock by his attacker that he thought he was going to die. Today he said he would find it difficult to forgive the culprit, despite his strong Christian values. Dr Fuller who has served as an auxiliary clergyman at several Swindon churches had worn his ecclesiastical robes and collar on Sunday for the first time in six months, after recovering from a heart attack in Easter. He had enjoyed a packed service and evening meal at Stratton St Margaret Church, which was held to mark the opening of a new church centre. When he returned home in the evening, he was confronted by a young man at his gate. The man presented a £20 note and asked Dr Fuller if he could swap it for smaller change so he could catch the bus home. But when he invited the man into his house to fetch a cash tin, which contained around £180, the robber jumped on him from behind and snatched the tin. "I had my back to him and while I was sorting through the cash to find some silver, an arm suddenly came around and grabbed me," he said. "He held my head in an armlock and I thought I was going to die I could barely breath. I think my clerical collar was the only thing that prevented me from being strangled." Dr Fuller, of Oxford Road, Lower Stratton, fell to his knees but despite his age he managed to fight his attacker off and knocked him to the ground. The man then fled with the open tin, although it is not clear how much he made off with as some of the notes were strewn across the room in the tussle. Dr Fuller made it to the door in time to see the robber sprint along Oxford Road and turn left into Whilestone Way. Badly shaken but unhurt, he went next door, where his niece Susan Ruddle took him in and called the police. Dr Fuller, who has led services at St Augustine's, St Saviour's, St Mark's, St Luke's and Stratton St Margaret churches, has lived at the house for 63 years and said it was the first time in his life he has been a victim of crime. "I didn't think twice about letting him in, but I think I'll be more cautious in future," he said. "The irony is that if he'd just asked for money, I'd probably have given it him." If a young man attacks you in your own home, it's fairly shattering and it will certainly change my thinking on things, but it won't stop me going out. "I know it is against the Christian spirit, but I think it will take me a long time to forgive this man." Westlea burglary squad has produced a photo-fit of the robber, who was white, aged between 20 and 25, about 5ft 7in tall, unkempt in appearance, and possibly a vagrant. He has short hair and stubble on his face and was wearing a dark knee-length jacket at the time.

**Evening Advertiser 21st November 2000**