

Priest's farewell to 'finest view in diocese of Guildford'

FIVE years after arriving as the Priest-in-Charge of the parishes of Dunsfold and Hascombe, Canon Paul Jenkins is bidding adieu and heading for fresh pastures.

His final services will take place on Sunday, with a morning service at St Peter's in Hascombe at 10am and a traditional Evensong by candlelight at St Mary & All Saints in Dunsfold at 4pm.

"It has been fun," Canon Jenkins declared this week, saying: "Whoever succeeds me will be blessed with the finest view from any rectory in the Diocese of Guildford."

He arrived in the two parishes in January 2007, having been invited by the Bishop of Dorking, the Rt Rev Ian Brackley, to move from his previous role as director of St Columba's House in Woking, the retreat house and conference centre.

"I had an invitation to come here for three years and that was extended at his suggestion, but I decided to draw the line at five years," he said.

Although in his 67th year, the former school teacher decided the time was right to take up one more ministry, as a result of which he is leaving Surrey to become Master of the Almshouses at Hugh Sexey's Hospital, which was founded

in 1638 at Bruton in Somerset.

He will be responsible for the pastoral care of 37 residents and will hold services in a 'lovely little chapel' and, once again, a 'very ancient building' - both Dunsfold and Hascombe churches are listed and also feature in Simon Jenkins' guide to England's 1,000 best churches.

Canon Jenkins won't be moving into the unknown as he taught history and history of art at Bryanston School in Somerset and many of his former colleagues have retired in the area.

"I am looking forward to it," he said, but acknowledged: "I have had five very happy years here."

Highlights of the past five years, said Canon Jenkins, had included overseeing the installation of a kitchen and hot and cold running water, along with the completion of a new toilet, and restoration of the lych gate and porch at Dunsfold, as well as initiatives like the monthly Café Church at the Winn Hall and ongoing work at 'two very special churches'.

This week he also learned permission had been granted to renew the shingling on the steeple in Hascombe and, hopefully, restoration of its gilded cockerel.

"None of this would have

occurred without the generous support of two very loyal congregations who have been very supportive," said Canon Jenkins, who has also been chaplain to the Mayor of Waverley, Cllr Richard Gates, since last May.

Acknowledging two issues which have loomed large during his period in Dunsfold, he said: "The first is what to do with the school building, part of which is owned by the diocese while another part is owned by the county council.

"Living here I can see this complicated matter from both sides, but I also understand the need for robust trusteeships.

"I have watched the diocese of Guildford make enormous efforts to see the matter resolved, together with the Charity Commissioners.

"It's therefore a great sadness to me that this matter has grumbled on for so long and I look forward to seeing an honourable outcome for the long-term future of the village," said Canon Jenkins.

"The second issue is to do with plans for housing on the airfield and there's little I can add to that debate, save to say that historic villages always have to live with the tension between conservation and adaptation to new social conditions and local needs.



Canon Paul Jenkins who's leaving St Mary's and All Saints, Dun

"The parish and its people can be assured that they will remain in my prayers as I move

on," he added. Canon Jenkins is leaving something behind in Dunsfold - bottles of sloe gin

produced by Taurus Wines boast a label featuring a caricature of him and the church and

bear the name Pa Pleasure. It is available the village shop.