



Registered Charity, No. 1194017

Patron: His Royal Highness the Duke
of Gloucester KG GCVO RIBA

PRESS RELEASE (embargoed until 21:00 6th September 2025)

Fort Purbrook Activity Centre recognised by Fortress Study Group.

Today the Fortress Study Group have awarded the Peter Ashley Activities Centres Trust a plaque recognising the excellence of their recent project to restore a bridge into their barrack block. The award also recognises the long-term work of the Trust to conserve Fort Purbrook and Fort Widley through giving these historic fortifications new purpose and meaning as Activity Centres of huge value to the local community.

David Clarke, Chair of the Fortress Study Group said, *"we are delighted to be awarding Fort Purbrook this FSG plaque which they thoroughly deserve for their hard work balancing the challenges of running a successful activity centre for local people with the responsibility of a looking after a scheduled monument. As fortification enthusiasts we are delighted to see that these two forts are in good hands."*

Lydia Tarttelin, Marketing and Outreach Officer, Peter Ashley Activity Centres Trust said: *"We are honoured to receive this recognition and support from such a prestigious organisation as the FSG. This plaque stands as a testament to our ongoing commitment to making the Forts accessible to everyone—now and for generations to come. Our grateful thanks to our partners including Portsmouth City Council, Historic England for their invaluable support. Together we have made a difference".*

Historic England has been supporting the Peter Ashley Activities Centre Trust over a number of years to improve the condition of both forts and help access vital funding for conservation work. The wrought iron bridges at Fort Purbrook have been repaired thanks to grant of £207,254 in 2021 via the Government's Heritage Stimulus Fund, while the repair of the brick access bridges at Fort Widley has recently been completed thanks to a further £264,292 from Historic England.

Rachel James, Historic England Architect said, *"The Peter Ashley Activity Centre Trust team have proven themselves to be excellent custodians of this extraordinary historic site. It is rewarding to see the extensive conservation work undertaken in the last few years recognised by the Fortress Study Group who are so familiar with the complexities involved with maintaining and revitalising these types of*

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buildings. We're proud to support the Trust as they continue to offer the fantastic range of activities they do within an awe-inspiring historic setting."

This award ceremony was part of a three-day visit to the Portsmouth area by the Fortress Study Group.

A conference at Fort Brockhurst on Friday discussed the challenges and opportunities for the conservation and sustainable re-use of forts and other ex-military sites. The conference heard how communities around Europe and the UK have turned their abandoned fortifications from all eras into positive assets benefitting the local community and economy. Forts Purbrook and Widley being practical local examples of this approach.

As a small but practical step to help realise some of the ideas discussed, the FSG launched its latest [grants programme](#) at the conference. Although the group has limited funds, previous awards have helped education and conservation work at forts in Kent, Sussex, Cornwall, France and Belgium.

On Saturday and Sunday FSG members are visiting of forts in Gosport and Portsmouth.

About the Fortress Study Group (see also our [website](#)):

Who we are:

- A UK based charity founded in 1975 with a purpose to educate the public about artillery fortifications worldwide
- Members can either be individuals or organizations like research libraries and fort societies
- Our membership is international (approx. 75% UK/ 25% worldwide)
- We are members of the International Fortress Council (IFC)
- We are run by volunteers

What we do:

- Publish in English about worldwide artillery fortifications
- Publish [FORT](#) – a c160 page peer reviewed journal annually
- Publish [Casemate](#) – a c60 page magazine three times a year
- Hold a webinar twice a month – over 150 so far

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- Give small grants to fortification projects/ research – see [news article](#)
- Campaign for the sustainable conservation and reuse of fortifications
- International Tours (Crete and Belgium this year)
- UK Study Tours – Portsmouth this year
- Hold annual conferences on fortification topics - this year 'Fortifications at Risk'

About the Peter Ashley Activity Centres Trust

- Custodians of two Victorian Forts overlooking Portsmouth.
- A thriving Charity that provides a fantastic mix of outdoor and academic linked activities within these scheduled monuments.
- Fort Purbrook is home to the multi-activity centre with a 120-bed residential facility.
- Fort Widley is home to the equestrian centre with outdoor and indoor riding school, affiliated to the RDA.
- Through the successful negotiation of a full repair lease with Portsmouth City Council, the Charity is committed to ensuring the Forts are protected and maintained so that they can be enjoyed by future generations.
- 2023 - 2024 saw increase in the audience engagement figures across the Charity to over 95k

About Historic England

We are [Historic England](#), the public body that protects and brings life to the heritage that matters to us all, so it lives on and is loved for longer. From the extraordinary to the everyday, our historic places and spaces matter. From community centres to cathedrals, homes to high streets, markets to mills – there are special places we all choose to hold onto, the legacy we want to pass on and the stories we continue to tell. That's why we work together with people across England to discover, protect and bring new life to our shared historic environment, providing advice, knowledge, support and services. Follow us on social media @HistoricEngland.

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