



Registered Charity, No. 1194017

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

## PRESS RELEASE (embargoed until 21:00 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025)

### Dame Caroline Dineage MP addresses international Fortifications at Risk conference at Fort Brockhurst, Gosport.

A conference at Fort Brockhurst today discussed the challenges and opportunities for the conservation and sustainable re-use of forts and other ex-military sites. Hosted by the Fortress Study Group, a charity with an education mission, 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.

Opening the conference, **Dame Caroline Dineage MP**, said *"Gosport's fortifications are central to the history and character of my Constituency. They point to its proud service of the Royal Navy, over hundreds of years."*

*As the defence industrial base in Gosport has declined the challenge for policymakers has been to reimagine the role of historic military sites like these. That is why, as Chair of the Culture, Media, and Sport Committee I launched an inquiry into built heritage to explore how we can support the reinvigoration of these sites in the best interest of local communities and economies."*

**David Clarke, Chair of the Fortress Study Group** commented, *"we are delighted to be welcoming experts from Germany, The Netherlands, Croatia, the Ukraine and from across the south of England and hearing about their experiences in creating positive futures for abandoned fortifications."*

*The aim of the conference is to spread the message that abandoned sites can make a huge contribution to their local community and can also be part of a wider cultural network of historic sites. Here in Gosport and Portsmouth there are some excellent examples of what can be done and we hope the conference today will contribute to finding good outcomes for other, often challenging sites."*

Deniz Beck, conservation architect and the founding director of conference partner the [Sustainable Conservation Trust \(SCT\)](#) said *"It has been a privilege to welcome fellow professionals to Fort Brockhurst. Over the years I have worked on different kinds of projects at different stages: Hotwalls Studios as a council-led scheme demonstrated how funding can unlock regeneration; Fort Cumberland showed how*

The Fortress Study Group is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) Registered Charity, No. 1194017

E-Mail: [chair@fortressstudygroup.org](mailto:chair@fortressstudygroup.org)

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*existing estate budgets could be used to bring casemates back into use; and under the Sustainable Conservation Trust we delivered the Gosport Alleyways project, animating overlooked spaces through community stories.*

*More recently, SCT has prepared detailed proposals for converting the Officers' Quarters at Fort Brockhurst into artist studios — an echo of the Hotwalls model across the water — commissioned by English Heritage but not yet implemented. Each of these experiences underlines our mission: to act early, use creativity to raise awareness, and help fragile sites become resilient, community-led assets"*

As a small but practical step to help realise some of the ideas discussed, the FSG is launching its latest [grants programme](#) today. 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 will be visiting of forts in Gosport and Portsmouth and on Sunday we will be awarding Fort Purbrook a FSG Plaque in recognition of the quality of a recent project to restore a bridge into their barrack block.

## About the Conference

Full details of the conference and the speakers are available [here](#).

## 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:

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- 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
- 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'

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