Neo-Tudor Architecture: Origins, Meanings, and Legacies (Oxford, 14-16 May 27)

Oxford, University of Oxford, May 14–16, 2027
Deadline: Oct 26, 2026

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This is the first conference to explore the modern era's fascination with the Tudor period as seen in the popularity of Neo-Tudor architecture. Set amidst a discourse of 'Vanishing England' the 'Mock-Tudor' remains too easily ridiculed and dismissed as 'serious' Architecture. Yet outside of this professional debate the Tudor age is celebrated in other modes of production as the 'golden age' of King Henry VIII, 'Good Queen Bess,' and Shakespeare.

With its origins in the rusticity of the Picturesque Movement of the 18th century – epitomised in John Nash's Blaise Hamlet - this seemingly quintessential element of English character expanded greatly in the nineteenth century through the Victorian 'prodigy houses' of Anthony Salvin and Charles Barry such as Harlaxton and Highclere. Later it also became one of the chief revivalist modes of the century associated with George Devey's work at Ascott House, Richard Norman Shaw's Grim's Dyke, and others working in the 'Old English' style.

'Tudorbethan' was thus well established by the early twentieth century, promoted by journals such as 'Country Life', its associated publications, and architectural competitions. Typically seen in the work of architects such as H.M. Baillie Scott it then blossomed to its greatest prominence in the inter-war period as a default image of England in the work of figures such as Triggs and Unsworth, Blunden Shadbolt, in exhibition pavilions, and the show-houses of volume house-builders. It became reproduced in suburban housing estates, municipal park buildings, pubs, banks, petrol stations, railway stations, electricity sub-stations and bus-shelters, to become an architecture of everyday life constructing notions of the 'Ideal Home.' Yet it was also employed as part of a vernacular 'Grand Manner' in the country houses of Lutyens and others, great department stores such as 'Liberty's', ocean-going liners, and spawned a domestic Neo-Tudor of brick, stone, and tile-hanging such as Sparsholt Manor and Durford Edge. The architectural politics of the time such 'Smaller County Houses of today' sat alongside their Neo-Georgian contemporaries as both a challenge and affront to Modernism.

Meanwhile the Neo-Tudor spoke to different transatlantic audiences in the United States and elsewhere through the skyscrapers of New York's Tudor City, and the lavish homes of the new captains of industry in New England and California. In Anglophile parts of Europe, the tradition of traditional timber-framed building also held its own fascinations and diverse histories, as found in dynastic diversions such as Potsdam's Cecilienhof Palace. Behind this all sat the colonial mechanisms of Empire that exported Neo-Tudor from Shimla in India to Sydney in Australia, stopping off in Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Singapore and elsewhere on its way.

Original papers are invited that explore the widespread phenomena of Neo-Tudor Architecture in the modern era, its origins, and legacies.

Proposals of 150-300 words, including a provisional title, for 20-30 minute papers are now invited. Please include with your proposal your name, institutional affiliation (if any), postal and email address. Proposals should be sent to julian.holder@conted.ox.ac.uk no later than 26 October 2026, to whom further questions may be directed. Applicants will be informed of the outcome of the selection process by 31 October 2026. No further correspondence will be entered into concerning unsuccessful submissions. Reasonable travel expenses within the U.K. will be re-imbursed.

It is hoped that suitable contributions will be published following the event in a volume to complement Holder and McKellar (eds.), 'Neo-Georgian architecture: a reappraisal 1880-1970'.

Papers may wish to consider, but are not restricted to, such topics as:

- The Picturesque and the mythologising of the Tudor
- The development of Antiquarian interest
- Raising revivalist timbers – Devey, Shaw, Baillie Scott, Lutyens, etc.
- The impact of conservation – notable cases, and causes, such as the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust

Neo-Tudor or Arts and Crafts?

- Building or architecture, interior design or decoration? Questions of professional/amateur identity, class, and gender
- Popular culture – from film to floral clocks, the half-timbered car and the chocolate-box
- Specific case-studies of buildings, builders, and/or architects
- The role of Neo-Tudor in discourses of Empire, Colonialism, and the Post-Colonial
- Neo-Tudor building typologies – pubs, banks, shops, shopping arcades, etc
- The role of the speculative developer and house-builder
- The 1920s, housing reform, and semi-detached suburbia
- Nationalist projections - International exhibitions, transatlantic liners interiors
- The Country House, 'The Smaller County House,' and the cottage in the country
- The 'Ideal Home' exhibitions and 'Metro-land'
- The vernacular and the polite – the amateur and the professional
- The timber-frame revival in contemporary architecture

The conference will form part of a Weekend event at the Department of Continuing Education, University of Oxford, from May 14-16, 2027 beginning with an evening lecture on 14th May 2027. The conference is organised by the University of Oxford and the Society of Architectural Historians of Great Britain.

Reference:

CFP: Neo-Tudor Architecture: Origins, Meanings, and Legacies (Oxford, 14-16 May 27). In: ArtHist.net, Oct 21, 2026 (accessed Nov 24, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/54710>.