



**A Cambridge Kid  
In the '30s And '40s**

Scenes from the Life and Work of Jonathan Bayliss

*Friday, June 17, 2022, 10 - 3*

*Houghton Library, Harvard Yard, Cambridge, Massachusetts*

PROGRAM

Welcome *Catherine Bayliss, JBS*

Houghton's Bayliss Papers *Leslie Morris, Houghton Library*

Readings from *Prologos* "Book of Ruth"

*John Day*

*Peter Littlefield*

*Theo MacGregor*

*Victoria Bayliss Mattingly*

Cambridge as a Point of Departure *Paul McGeary*

Readings

BOX LUNCH & WALK TO CHARLES RIVER VIA LOWELL HOUSE

Readings

Bayliss Childhoods in Cambridge *David Bowditch*

Readings

Jonathan Bayliss at Harvard *John Day*

*After the Houghton program ends at 3 pm, all are invited to join a guided walk through Cambridge Common up Concord Avenue. Public bus route is available for return trip.*



### SUNDAY SCHOOL AT CHRIST CHURCH

*Childhood memories of Michael Chapman, from Prologos, "Book of Ruth"*

I had to traverse that damned Common a mile from home at least four times a week going and coming to all the things I did at Christ Church Protestant Episcopal my parish the mathematical inversion of St Peter's on Observatory Hill near where we lived in that it comprised a small congregation from a large area where I had more fun than anywhere else and truly liberal charity quite beyond the traditional benefaction of Praying Republicans though including a Sir Galahad Club based on Tennysonian murals in the Boston Public Library that featured high ritualistic misconceptions about the mystical

Glastonbury symbolism of the one true Holy Cup too pure for Sir Lancelot or King Arthur in my mind Alfred's successor and contemporary of Robin Hood whereas the establishment as a whole was lower than whale-shit run by people I loved and admired from the rector whom I sometimes served at Holy Communion on Thursday morning with a red cassock under my plain Protestant cotta to the sexton whom I served putting away folding chairs after Sunday School in one class of which I was taught easier tradition by various intelligent and goodnatured Divinity School students and genial curates.

"Old 44!" This is the name a group of Cambridge boys have taken for their club which meets nightly in a brick clubhouse they have constructed in the rear of 269 Upland Road. They begged bricks and clay to build their meeting place in which they have installed bunks, a bookcase and other equipment. Jonathan Bayliss is the president of the club, and is shown heating water for coffee.



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### Home, Sweet Home, in a Shack

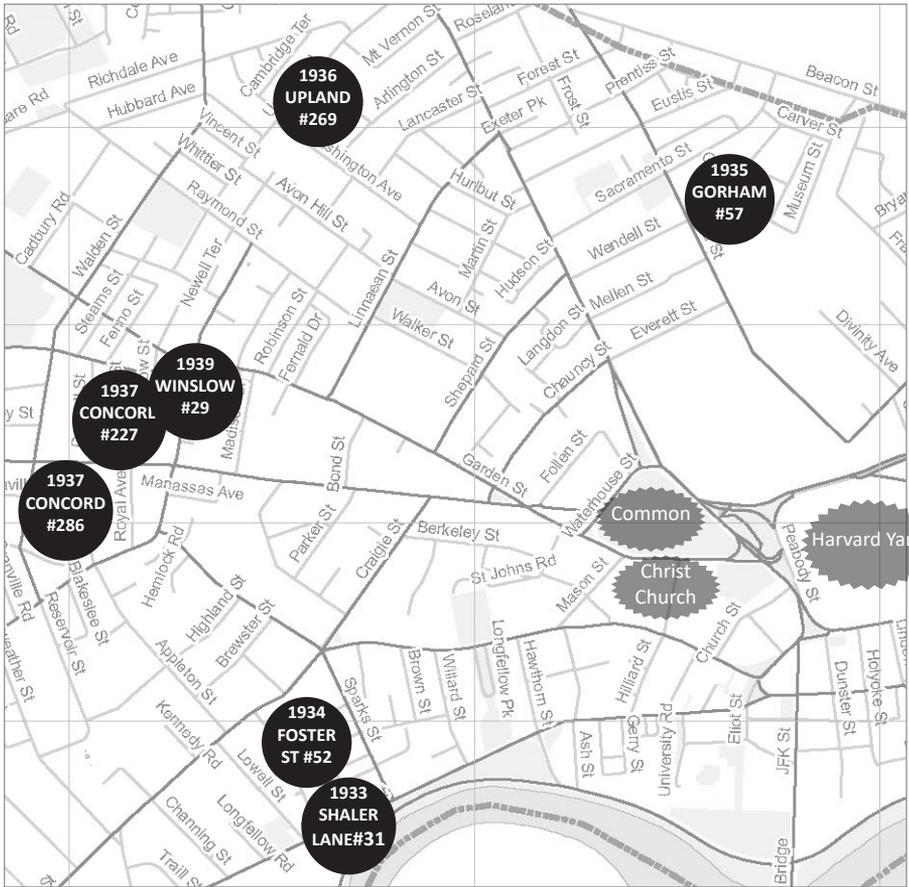
Talk about your soap box contests; Here's a group of Cambridge kids who have the instincts of domesticity so strong that they have garnered from the yards of remodelled houses enough of the materials for building to have erected a three-room shack called the "Old 44 Clubhouse" at the rear of a house at 269 Upland road. . . . Sharing the honors of this feat are Billy Klaila, 10, of Huron avenue, and Jonathan Bayliss, 9, of Upland road, pals of Peabody School's sixth grade, class of '37. . . . There are others interested in this real estate development. . . . Nine-year-old Pete Jones of Upland road, the district's "most popular fella," and Jonathan Bayliss, tolerant in spite of himself, lets his sister, Sandra, 7, and little brother, Pete, 6, belong to the organization. . . . The clubhouse is complete from soup to nuts. . . . Icebox, bookcase and official banners. . . . A chimney, the materials for which were culled from piles of bricks at a local brickyard, and cemented together by the primitive method of taking clay from Mother Nature at a pit where pottery clay is obtained in Cambridge, are also features of the shack. . . . So it's an affair, purely local. . . . And if you were to visit the boys of the "Old 44" at a meeting time, you'd see that the outfit is replete with all the mysteries and high-signs and so on, that go with all properly run secret societies. . . . When things get too hot, and quarrels flare, there's always Jerry's Pit to cool the fevered brow and lacerated tempers of the "44 Gang."

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### EXCERPTS FROM A 1999 INTERVIEW WITH BROTHERS BAYLISS

We went to the Arlington Convent before Shaler Lane ... I can remember the phone number Porter 029AM [?] ... one of the last times we ever had a phone ... The Old Lady was working for the *Boston Herald*. She used to commute on the train ... streetcar ... Our next-door neighbor was an electrical engineer, a teacher from MIT ... Kimbark ... Many years later he gave me a letter of recommendation to college because I built such beautiful things with blocks ... After Shaler Lane we moved to 52 Foster Street ... [Peter talks about 2nd floor] We had a third floor too ... I built a boat house out of wood ... boats inside ... And we had rigged up with the Kennedys on the other half of the duplex ... we rigged up a line ... telephone ... through the window ... I was in Lowell [School] ... I skipped

the second ... I used to show off Peter all over Cambridge: "Look at my little brother! He can spell BEAUTIFUL! Peter, spell BEAUTIFUL!" ... There was a dog in Shaler Lane ... named Nellie, something like that? ... sort of orange and white dog ... I think we went to Gorham Street, Agassiz School and then from there it was Concord Avenue, two different places ... [286] was before 227, wasn't it? ... Next door there was a drugstore that had a specialty of selling cones ... it was delicious—sherbert—the last money we had. Every time the Old Lady got money together we'd buy ice cream. During the hot summers. And I remember we made a lot of paper airplanes—we were on the third deck and that's where she used to work on her novel downstairs in the cellar ... she rented a typewriter.



*Peter, Jonathan, and Sandra with their mother, 286 Concord Avenue, 1937.*

START OF THE CHARLES RIVER TEST SAIL OF *GLOUCESTERMAN*  
*Childhood memories of Michael Chapman, from Prologos, "Book of Ruth"*

I went up Huron across Concord Avenue and then over the hill at the bend straight down the rich part of Sparks all the way past Brattle and Foster to the slummy block and across Mt Auburn to the river at the tract that had still been known as the Ox Marsh sixty years before the Revolution when Andrew Robinson who may have been a descendant of the Pilgrim pastor who never got to Plymouth and whose granddaughter married a president of Harvard sent down the ways from his wharf now known as Pirate's Lane in East Gloucester the first true schooner in world history which schooned even before she was rigged, like the flat stones we always looked for that skipped and skimmed there on the Charles if you threw them right but always sank in the

end. It is hull and rig together that make the true schooner not the one or the other each with its own traditional prototypes. Houses trees and vehicles drawn apart from each other made way for us neither stumbling nor colliding. Every obstacle by keeping to itself secured our weathering passage. We penetrated and embraced natural elements of the lowest atmosphere the beneficent storm assured us of lovely secrecy and by the time we reached waterside the boat's steady vibrant wings hauled closer to our course than to the wind had proved equal to all opposing forces.

At the edge of the river she trembled and fluttered while I fiddled with the sheets and attached the endless hank of string I'd brought as a cable.

- 18. Name any offices you have held in your class or in the student government of your school.  
*No student gov't of any kind. In charge of small military squad and some building construction work.*
- 19. What prizes, contests, or honors of a scholastic, literary, or scientific nature have you won? For three yrs. I got the highest general scholarship award here at school. Full scholarship here.
- 20. On what teams have you played? *Informal football + baseball. No organized athletics here.*
- 21. Are you a candidate for a scholarship? *Yes* If you are a candidate for a scholarship, you should answer Questions 23 to 37, inclusive, completely. If you are not a scholarship candidate, leave Questions 23 to 37 blank.
- 22. What do you expect to get out of your course at Harvard? (The Committee desires a careful answer to this question. It should be written in the candidate's own handwriting.)

A real education requires more than the narrowness of the utmost skill in one field. Just as a brilliant scientist, an expert in his work, may be lacking an education, so an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer is uneducated who has not had a broader training. Success in all senses of the word may reach him, but he is not really educated to ~~progress~~ <sup>contribute</sup> much outside his work. Many foreign intellectuals and great men of letters after remarks upon this perhaps materialistic tendency in our country. Part of the requirement for a lasting peace after the war is universal understanding and interest through cultural as well as professional education.

The best place to acquire a broad education and cosmopolitan experience is a large university — a university in the old world sense of the word. Harvard is just such a place; perhaps the only one left in America. Like everything else a university much change with the times: it must represent many types of people; it must teach new things as well as the <sup>old</sup> inspiration of culture; it must be progressive and modern, not impractical and old-fashioned; it must help the country to "win the war and write the peace", ~~and~~ <sup>and</sup> trying to keep as much of its cultural curriculum as possible during the war as it looks forward to the problems of a world peace.

I want to be a hard, practical, materialistic aeronautical engineer. Naturally, M.I.T. or California Tech. would be the first thought. But, as in Europe before the war, I would also to also be an expert in other ~~some~~ branches of engineering as well as languages, history, art, architecture, pure science. In Europe I probably, with the time and money, could have earned a doctor's degree in three or four of these. But it is typically American to want to get to the top of your favorite field — a life's work. Therefore, one must give up some of his interests to a certain extent. (Cont'd on enclosed paper) p. (A)

(DATE) January 2, 1943

(SIGNED) Jonathan Bayliss



From Bayliss's 1943 Harvard application. A member of the wartime class of 1947, he stayed for two terms (assigned to Lowell House E-52a) before leaving to join the Navy. Correspondence in Harvard's records mention financial hardship and requests for loans and scholarships. After the war, Bayliss resumed college at University of California, Berkeley. In a 1992 email to Peter Anastas, Bayliss wrote: "As a kid it wasn't until I'd lived in Vermont for a few years, after growing up as a Cambridge townie, that it occurred to me that I'd want to be a student there. I probably would have loved it for four yrs and more if it hadn't been for the excitements of WW2. After which I really preferred the more Continental student independence (and open atmosphere) of Berkeley. Still, my loyalty and admiration has long since returned to the dear old Yard, where I'm happy to have library and even faculty club privileges. I think Harvard has vastly improved."

## VISITING LOWELL HOUSE AFTER THE TEST SAIL

*Childhood memories of Michael Chapman, from Prologos, "Book of Ruth"*

Thanks in part to F D R I can't help feeling kindly toward Harvard when I'm not in its presence. Rod's quarters opened my eyes to Oxford colleges and all the other rooms for English bachelors that I later read about and the memory has not been driven from my gallery of fixed images by the impression of Caleb's shambling burrow which accommodates itself rather to the shabby Russian pattern in my penurious magazine of visual notions though also enviable in my present condition. Lowell House unlike Caleb's roachy mountain of housekeeping rooms had a dining hall with waitresses and menu options. Rod wanted me to meet his roommate a schooner yachtsman and member of the N R O T C who probably would have said WELCOME ABOARD while heartily shaking my hand not understanding how uncomfortable it is for a poor incult townie lad to cope with fashionable introductions far above his station but luckily he was hobnobbing at the Lampoon and I got away before he returned to discover for his ingenuous companion the contemptible limitations of my maritime savvy. It was a well-appointed suite those two lived in with private bath and maid service each with his own bedroom study as well as all the space he could wish in front of the fireplace in their common chamber. Notwithstanding the restrictions upon their liberty of entertainment and usage in respect to girls compared with the liberties of Caleb and many of the independent students at Berkeley they

were destined for officers' wardrooms simply by virtue of a Bursar's card as sirs or dukes from the outset. I did not conceal my enthusiasm for the manly lines and crimson colors of the seductively comfortable room in which I sat surrounded by Veritas devices and expensive bibelots that seemed more appropriate to cultivated characters of fiction than to college boys and for a few minutes almost stole away my loyalty to the uniformed vigor of fouled anchors and pennants of blue and gold. I'd be willing to bet that before the war was over they both made it to Lieutenant Commander at least. Rod kept the conversation going with stories about the House as a worldly Senior affecting to deprecate their importance in his personal thesaurus of facts. One that didn't come back to mind until I was able to grasp its import after nearly four years of a high school that preserved respectful lore of Harvard in a few of its classrooms was that the Houses with their quasi-English tutorial system were endowed by a Yale alumnus after being turned down in New Haven. Endowment underlies everything centered in the Yard academic as well as architectural and maybe that's one place where culture justifies the supremacy of property rights. At any rate Harvard men whether skinny Marxists on scholarship or incipient stockbroking leaders of Class fund drives always seem to be occultly gifted with the economic advantage of mastering interrelationships between mind and matter.



## Jonathan Bayliss

Bayliss was born in 1926 in Arlington, Massachusetts, to Henry and Lois Henderson Balos, who divorced in 1932, after which Lois—adopting the name Bayliss—raised her three children alone. She moved the family frequently during the Great Depression. Her children attended public schools in Cambridge and then in Arlington, Vermont. Later Jonathan won a scholarship to the Newton School, South Windham, Vermont.

Bayliss studied at Harvard, served in the Navy during World War 2, and graduated from the University of California at Berkeley.

He earned a livelihood in positions involved with sales analysis, accounting controls, and management, beginning in 1950 at a Berkeley bookstore. In the 1960s, as controller at Gorton's of Gloucester, the frozen-fish processor, he was a pioneer in developing integrated business applications for the IBM System 360. After leaving Gorton's in 1972, Bayliss devoted the next five years to full-time writing, with the help of a literary grant from the Massachusetts Arts and Humanities Foundation. Later he worked for the City of Gloucester as an executive aide to the mayor and as city treasurer. In 1985 he resumed full-time writing.

Bayliss died in 2009 in Gloucester, where he had lived most of his adult life.

Bayliss's massive fiction series is entitled GLOUCESTERMAN. The four related novels are *Prologos*, *Gloucesterbook*, *Gloucestertide*, and *Gloucestermas*. His stage plays, based loosely on the Sumerian Gilgamesh epic, are *The Tower of Gilgamesh* and *The Acts of Gilgamesh*.

## Speakers and Readers

**David Bowditch** is the nephew of Jonathan Bayliss (son of Jonathan's sister, Sandra) and secretary of the Jonathan Bayliss Society.

**John Day**, a resident of Cambridge in the 1970s while he completed his Harvard Ph.D., had a forty-year career as a college professor and administrator. He first seriously encountered Bayliss's work in retirement in Gloucester, his spouse's home town.

**Peter Littlefield** works in the theater, somewhere between the New York downtown performance world and opera. He teaches playwrighting at the Cambridge Center for Adult Education. His short film, *Brother Dud*, is available on Vimeo.

**Theo MacGregor** is a retired high school history teacher, social worker, utility company regulator, and consultant on energy efficiency and affordability. She is also a frustrated actor who is thrilled to be able to participate in this program.

**Victoria Bayliss Mattingly** is Jonathan's middle child and serves on the Bayliss Society's Board of Directors.

**Paul McGeary** is a resident of Clovis, California. A retired journalist and public official, he resided in Gloucester for over forty years and was proud to be a friend of Jonathan Bayliss.

**Leslie Morris** is Gore Vidal Curator of Modern Books and Manuscripts at Houghton Library.

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[www.jonathanbayliss.org](http://www.jonathanbayliss.org)