

JFK: The Last Speech

What links John F Kennedy, poet Robert Frost and Beaconsfield? Here's an interesting film projection, in Beaconsfield, Saturday 22nd June, as part of an European tour with its producer Neil Bicknell from the USA.

Saturday 22nd June 2019 at 7.30 p.m.
The Fitzwilliam Centre, Windsor End, Beaconsfield HP9 2JW

Of President John F. Kennedy, many stories have been told. Few are less known or more revealing than his friendship with America's most celebrated poet. Yet it was Robert Frost that Kennedy made the subject of one of his most famous speeches, just weeks before his assassination. *JFK: The Last Speech* explores the dramatic relationship between these two seminal Americans, reaching its tragic climax in a surprising encounter with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the height of the Cold War. At its centre is an extraordinary speech about poetry and power that inspires a group of college classmates to alter the course of their lives.

Robert Frost and his family lived on Reynolds Road in Beaconsfield from 1912 until 1915. While living there, he published his first two volumes of poetry and gained his first public recognition as a poet of consequence. In 2012 the community had a celebration to commemorate Frost's arrival 100 years earlier. The screening of this film about the relationship between Frost and President Kennedy is of great interest to residents in the Beaconsfield area.

Robert Lee Frost (1874 –1963) was an American poet. His work was initially published in England before it was published in America. Known for his realistic depictions of rural life and his command of American colloquial speech, Frost frequently wrote about settings from rural life in New England in the early twentieth century, using them to examine complex social and philosophical themes. Frost was honoured frequently during his lifetime, receiving four Pulitzer Prizes for Poetry. He became one of America's rare "public literary figures, almost an artistic institution." He was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal in 1960 for his poetic works. On July 22, 1961, Frost was named poet laureate of Vermont.



SPECIAL FILM SCREENING of the new American film celebrating the friendship between Robert Frost, America's premier poet and one-time resident of Beaconsfield, and the 35th US President, John F. Kennedy. Followed by a post-film discussion with the executive producer Neil Bicknell and his wife Judy.

JFK THE LAST SPEECH

Saturday June 22 - 7:30 pm
The Fitzwilliams Centre, Windsor End, Beaconsfield HP9 2JW

Tickets **£10**
includes refreshment

Available in person from Beaconsfield Library
Reynolds Road, Beaconsfield HP9 2JW
Or The Beaconsfield Society 01494-675923

B Proudly hosted by the Beaconsfield Society
www.beaconsfieldnow.org.uk

Frost recited his poem *The Gift Outright* at John F. Kennedy's Inauguration and the two men developed a relationship of mutual respect. JFK spoke at Amherst College on October 26, 1963 (Neil Bicknell, a senior, in the audience) a few months after Frost's death. JFK praised Frost and the power of poetry;

"Our national strength matters, but the spirit which informs and controls our strength matters just as much. This was the special significance of Robert Frost. He brought an unsparing instinct for reality to bear on the platitudes and pieties of society. His sense of the human tragedy fortified him against self-deception and easy consolation. "I have been" he wrote, "one acquainted with the night." And because he knew the midnight as well as the high noon, because he understood the ordeal as well as the triumph of the human spirit, he gave his age strength with which to overcome despair. At bottom, he held a deep faith in the spirit of man, and it is hardly an accident that Robert Frost coupled poetry and power, for he saw poetry as the means of saving power from itself. When power leads men towards arrogance, poetry reminds him of his limitations. When power narrows the areas of man's concern, poetry reminds him of the richness and diversity of his existence. When power corrupts, poetry cleanses. For art establishes the basic human truth which must serve as the touchstone of our judgment."

JFK was assassinated on November 22, 1963, less than a month later. The Amherst speech was his last.

The speech altered the life course of a group of Amherst College classmates, including Neil Bicknell, who witnessed this compelling address and continued to exemplify in their contemporary lives a portrait of the challenges facing America. Neil Bicknell, so inspired by Frost at Amherst and by Kennedy, spent four years conceiving and making the film *JFK: The Last Speech* of which he is Executive Producer.

Neil is also Co-Editor of the companion book, *JFK: The Last Speech* (ISBN-13: 978-1643070742 available on Amazon). A description of the book including a complete table of contents is available on the project website www.jfkthelastspeech.org/the-book/.

Screening of "JFK: The Last Speech", British Isles tour June 2019

- U.S. Embassy in London on the evening of Thursday, June 20th (invitation only)
- Ramsgate Film Festival, 14th June (tickets available)
- Irish Film Institute, US Embassy in Dublin, 19th June (invitation only)
- Fitzwilliam Centre in Beaconsfield 22nd June (tickets available)

Judy and Neil look forward to seeing you at one of these events.

ncbicknell@bicknellgroup.com
June 2019 MB