

Beddome, James Brandon

(Died in 1959)

A founder of the North Okanagan Naturalists' Club in 1951, James "JB" was a much admired teacher at Vernon High School. He had a keen love of the outdoors and an enthusiasm for strenuous activity stemming from his boyhood days in Manitoba where he was born in 1888.

Beddome homesteaded and taught in Manitoba before the First World War. He had a distinguished war record, serving as a captain in the Royal Highlanders of Canada, 13th Battalion, winning the Military Cross. (Though seriously wounded, he did not think the wound worth reporting.) After the war he travelled in Italy and studied at Cambridge University. He married Kate McPherson, a primary teacher and principal in Medicine Hat, and the couple had three children; later three grandchildren. Mrs. Beddome died in 1955.

Before coming to Vernon, JB was principal of Fernie High School from 1920 to 1924, and of Revelstoke High from 1924 to 1927. He then came to Vernon to take on the role of principal of the deteriorating Mason Street High School for a year before returning to teaching. He reflected once that life at the Mason Street school was "hazardous....as large sections of plaster occasionally fell from the high ceilings."

His obituary speaks in glowing terms of his "broad learning, whether in physics or geology, international affairs or English poetry; his fine character, his even temper, fair dealing, modesty and delightful humour." Fondly known by students as "the Skipper", Beddome retired from teaching in 1953.

JB had been in ill health for nearly a year and, having spent the winter with a daughter in Barbados, died in 1959 while visiting another daughter in Burlington Ontario. He was buried there, at the age of 72.

The Naturalists' Club planted an oak sapling in Polson Park in his honour.