

## Ranchland Randonnee Report

September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024

By Graham Fishlock

(An Islander's idea of an Ideal brevet)

When I first saw Bob Goodison's route posting for his Ranchland Randonnee, I knew I had to ride it. It had everything I enjoy----wide open spaces with few cars, a promise of dry roads, and a route sheet so small that you could fit it on a business card. A small group of 5 riders warmed ourselves in the 2 degree start temperature as we climbed out of the Kamloops Valley on



Barnhartvale Road with views of the Thompson River.

Passing through rolling farmland and a short section of Highway 97 found us at the turn off for Douglas Lake Road.

The Douglas Lake Road is a seldom travelled road and is mostly gravel but offers great



views, remoteness and a sense of history. My bike computer identified 30 climbs on this brevet and many of them were on this gravel section and some were quite loose gravel but mostly short.



There was so much to enjoy as we passed through this terrain. The aspen and cottonwood trees added colour. I was lucky enough to ride the whole brevet with Bob, and we both kept remarking on how beautiful this entire route was proving to be.



Our first control at the 99 km point found us at the historic Douglas Lake Store located in the heart of the Douglas Lake Ranch. This ranch dates back to 1886, famously owned by “Chunky Woodward” at one time, is the largest ranch in Canada and made well-known by a book titled “Douglas Lake Ranch: Empire of Grass”.



After leaving the store and a cluster of old, well-maintained ranch buildings and cook house, we passed more lakes and open vistas before dropping quickly down to Nicola Lake and a First Nations reserve with an old log church. Our Lady of Lourdes is a Roman Catholic church that sits on the shore of Nicola Lake near the First Nations village of Quilchena. We turned here to cycle along Nicola Lake to our second control at the Quilchena General store. From here, we headed north along one of my all-time favourite roads to cycle-----the old Merritt to Kamloops hwy. 5A . This lovely road peacefully meanders north while passing many old farms and more lakes and wild life areas.



As we passed one of the many lakes, we were fortunate to twice pass small groups of White Pelicans. These amazing birds migrate to southern California and Mexico. They use their astounding ten foot (over 3 m) wingspan to do this.

Sighting the pelicans reminded Bob and I that earlier in the day on the Douglas Lake Road, we encountered something that impressed us even more. It was a large flock of about 50 Sandhill Cranes that were flying like a swarm of gigantic bees. Their loud trumpeting, honking and bugling sounds are unique and unmistakable during their migration. We were thrilled when they swirled and circled immediately above us.



We continued to enjoy more lakes and open vistas before turning onto the pleasant gravel of Campbell Creek Road. We finished feeling as though we had a shared a very special day filled with memorable sights, sounds and history. Thanks to Bob for creating such an ideal route.



Bob and Graham at the finish.