

Long Rider Pioneer of Environmental Research

by
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Peek into the footnotes of the history books and you will often find passing references to those second-sons, those footloose daughters that once roamed the world on horseback. These Long Riders sprang from all parts, for their need was an individualistic expression, not a national trend. One such wide-ranger was Harry de Windt. His life seemed to be a perfect battle within itself - one day Harry could be seen lounging in the most fashionable salons in Paris, the next day he could be found battling to stay alive in some God-forsaken patch of nameless territory. Yes, Harry was a Long Rider to the end of his polished fingertips, with his gourmet appetite for adventure.

Harry de Windt, lecturer, author, Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and equestrian explorer par excellence, saddled up in 1890 and set off to examine the forgotten corners of Persia and Baluchistan. The resultant journey was literally one for the record books. The last foreign traveller who passed through had been "waylaid, robbed, tied to a tree, and left to starve." But it was the deadly Kharzán Pass that threatened to stop the journey. It was dreaded by travellers, native and European, even in summer, when there are no avalanches to fear, snow-drifts to bar the way, or ice to render the narrow, tortuous pathway even more insecure.

Harry wrote, "All went well for a time and I was beginning to congratulate myself on having reached the summit without accident when the pack horse behind me blundered and slipped over the edge. The whole thing was over in ten seconds. We heard him striking here and there against a jutting rock or shrub, till, with a final thud, he landed on a small plateau of deep snow-at least three hundred feet below. The fall I have described would assuredly have killed a horse of any other nationality. On the contrary it had an exhilarating effect on the Persian pony. Before we could reach him, he had risen to his feet, given himself a good shake, and was nibbling at a bush that peeked through the snow.



De Windt already had a reputation for bravery and foolhardiness. Then he decided to top his own reputation by undertaking a journey too crazy to be considered by anyone else. He announced to a stunned Europe that he was going to leave his adopted home in Paris and journey to New York city. However instead of traveling west, crossing the Atlantic on a ship like everyone else in his day, De Windt proposed to travel east, across the frozen steppes of Siberia by horse-drawn sleigh, over the ice-packs of the Arctic Ocean by dog-sled, through the dark waterways of Canada by boat, and finally past the western deserts of the United States by train, before finally reaching his destination in faraway New York. What followed can only be compared to a Jules Verne fiction, yet is absolutely true. De Windt dined with political exiles in Siberia, almost starved in the Arctic ice fields, and lived through more dangers than a dozen men. Yet through it all this dashing explorer kept his nerve and his panache.

The "De Windt Expedition" left Paris on Dec. 19th 1901 and travelled to Moscow and thence to Yakutsk, Verkhoyansk, Nijni-Kolymsk, and the Bering Straits; travelling 11,263 miles and employing 808 horses, 887 reindeer and 114 dogs en route. From East Cape, Bering Straits they travelled to Cape Prince of Wales, Alaska, to Nome City, St. Michael's, Dawson City and eventually to New York on Aug. 25th 1902, covering a total distance of 18,494 miles.



Our once cold world is undergoing severe change and this includes Siberia. Captain Robert Scott is well remembered for having made careful measurements of the weather. Those Antarctic weather measurements were some of the first evidence used to prove that the planet had heated up drastically. But what has been lost until now is that Harry de Windt took temperature readings before Scott did. Harry measured the temperature every day as he travelled from Paris to New York via Siberia. These documents include temperatures measured at 6 a.m. and 6 p.m. every day.

APPENDIX VIII

METEOROLOGICAL RECORD OF THE DE WINDT EXPEDITION

PARIS TO NEW YORK, 1901-1902

Date.	Place.	Remarks.	S A M.	O P M.
Dec.				
19	Paris	Dull—some snow		40°
20	Berlin	} Nord Ex- press	42°	50°
21	Warsaw		41°	33°
22	Viazma		20°	22°
23	Moscow		22°	19°
24	"	Dull	17°	12°
25	"	" snow	- 2°	5°
26	"	" "	- 8°	- 5°
27	"	Fog and snow	- 10°	5°
28	"	Dull	14°	21°
29	"	Dull—snow	6°	15°
30	"	Dull	11°	12°
31	"	Dull—fog	20°	22°
Jan.				
1	"	Dull	20°	22°
2	"	"	30°	33°
3	"	"	32°	33°
4	"	"	37°	18°
5	"	"	30°	28°
6	"	"	32°	29°
7	"	"	19°	29°
8	"	Bright—some clouds	21°	25°
9	Trans-Siberian Railway	Bright sunshine	12°	0°
10	"	Fine	- 15°	- 9°
11	"	"	- 14°	2°
12	"	Dull—snow	7°	5°
13	Irkutsk	Fine	8°	15°
14	"	Dull	- 2°	10°

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Date.	Place.	Remarks.	8 A.M.	6 P.M.
Jan.				
15	Irkutsk	Dull	0°	15°
16	"	Bright sunshine	10°	22°
17	"	Fog and snow	15°	11°
18	"	Bright sunshine	- 8°	6°
19	"	Dull	- 2°	- 10°
20	Alzanovskaya	Bright sunshine	- 31°	- 35°
21		Fog	- 65°	- 30°
22		"	- 50°	- 32°
23		"	- 50°	11°
24		"	- 12°	1°
25		Dull—snow and gale N.E.	0°	8°
26		Clear	- 8°	5°
27		Snow	12°	5°
28		Clear	- 5°	- 14°
29		"	- 35°	- 30°
30		Fog	- 51°	- 35°
31		Snow	- 10°	- 5°
Feb.	Lena Post Road			
1		"	- 2°	- 2°
2		"	- 2°	- 5°
3		Bright sunshine	2°	5°
4		Dull	10°	12°
5		"	15°	15°
6		Fog	2°	- 5°
7		"	- 5°	- 4°
8		Fine	- 12°	- 28°
9		Bright sunshine	- 40°	- 32°
10		" "	- 30°	- 10°
11		" "	- 25°	- 16°
12		" "	- 28°	- 35°
13		" "	- 34°	- 25°
14	"	Snow	- 15°	- 24°
15	Yakutsk	Bright sunshine	- 24°	- 24°
16	"	" "	- 32°	- 34°
17	"	" "	- 34°	- 24°
18	"	" "	- 32°	- 26°
19	"	" "	- 20°	- 14°
20	"	" "	- 24°	- 30°
21	"	" "	- 41°	- 2°

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Date.	Place.	Remarks.	3 A.M.	6 P.M.
Jan.				
15	Irkutsk	Dull	0°	15°
16	"	Bright sunshine	10°	22°
17	"	Fog and snow	15°	11°
18	"	Bright sunshine	- 8°	6°
19	"	Dull	- 2°	- 10°
20	Alzanovskaya	Bright sunshine	- 31°	- 35°
21		Fog	- 65°	- 30°
22		"	- 50°	- 32°
23		"	- 50°	11°
24		"	- 12°	1°
25		Dull—snow and gale N.E.	0°	8°
26		Clear	- 8°	5°
27		Snow	12°	5°
28		Clear	- 5°	- 14°
29		"	- 35°	- 30°
30		Fog	- 51°	- 35°
31		Snow	- 10°	- 5°
Feb.	Lena Post Road			
1		"	- 2°	- 2°
2		"	- 2°	- 5°
3		Bright sunshine	2°	5°
4		Dull	10°	12°
5		"	15°	15°
6		Fog	2°	- 5°
7		"	- 5°	- 4°
8		Fine	- 12°	- 28°
9		Bright sunshine	- 40°	- 32°
10		"	- 30°	- 10°
11		"	- 25°	- 16°
12		"	- 28°	- 35°
13		"	- 34°	- 25°
14	"	Snow	- 15°	- 24°
15	Yakutsk	Bright sunshine	- 24°	- 24°
16	"	"	- 32°	- 34°
17	"	"	- 34°	- 24°
18	"	"	- 32°	- 26°
19	"	"	- 20°	- 14°
20	"	"	- 24°	- 30°
21	"	"	- 41°	- 2°

Date.	Place.	Remarks.	8 A.M.	6 P.M.
April				
1	Nijni-Kolymsk	Bright sunshine	-26°	-30°
2	" "	Fine—some snow	-18°	-20°
3	" "	Fine	-20°	-14°
4	Sukharno	Strong gale N. W	-16°	-20°
5	"	" " "	-15°	-22°
6	"	" " "	-20°	-20°
7	Camp I	Bright sunshine	-16°	-20°
8		Dull	0°	0°
9*		Strong gale N.	0°	-2°
10		Snow	20°	-10°
11		Strong gale N.W.	-10°	-10°
12		" " E.	5°	15°
13		Poorga N.W.	12°	25°
14		" "	12°	9°
15		" "	4°	-7°
16		" S.E.	-2°	5°
17		" "	10°	5°
18		" E.	0°	4°
19		Strong gale N.E.	0°	0°
20		" " W.	-5°	2°
21		Fine—N.E. light	6°	10°
22		Gale S.W.	0°	0°
23	Arctic Coast	Snowstorms	30°	5°
24		"	25°	5°
25		Dull—snow	12°	19°
26		Strong gale N.W.	22°	15°
27		Gale N.W.	20°	15°
28		Light breeze N.	14°	10°
29		Dull	25°	-2°
30		Bright sunshine	-8°	10
May				
1		Dull—gale N.	18°	16°
2		Snowstorms	22°	0°
3		Gale N. and snow	25°	15°
4		Strong gale N.W.	20°	20°
5†		" " N. E.	22°	20°

* 40° below zero inside tent for three hours at night.

† Dates from this must be set back one day on account of crossing 180° long.

Date.	Place.	Remarks.	8 A.M.	6 P.M.	
May 6	Arctic Coast	Dull	55°	24°	
7		Gale N.E.	32°	28°	
8		" S.W.	38°	26°	
9		Fog	26°	20°	
10		Bright and clear	15°	28°	
11		" " "	18°	25°	
12		" " "	23°	17°	
13		Dull—strong breeze S.W.	22°	25°	
14		Dull—strong breeze S.W.	22°	15°	
15		<i>Poorga</i> N.E.	15°	15°	
16		Dull—strong gale N.E.	20°	18°	
17		Strong gale N.W.—snow	20°	18°	
18		Snow	25°	20°	
19		" "	32°	25°	
20		" "	45°	25°	
21		Whalen-Bering Straits	" "	50°	34°
22		" " "	" "	32°	31°
23		" " "	Snow	44°	45°
24	" " "	Fog	44°	39°	
25	" " "	Strong breeze S.—dull	36°	40°	
26	" " "	Gale S.E. and sleet	35°	36°	
27	" " "	Fine	36°	39°	
28	" " "	Dull—fog	42°	40°	
29	" " "	"	43°	40°	
30	" " "	"	49°	34°	
31	" " "	"	38°	46°	
June 1	Bering Straits	Bright and clear	34°	28°	
2		Gale S.	32°	32°	
3		Dull—rain	42°	34°	
4		Bright and clear	56°	51°	
5		Clear	38°	52°	
6		Fine—hazy	56°	68°	

Date.	Place.	Remarks.	8 A.M.	6 P.M.	
June					
7	Bering Straits	Clear	47°	65°	
8		"	46°	55°	
9		"	48°	88°	
10		"	48°	60°	
11		"	45°	38°	
12*		Rain	46°	36°	
13		"	46°	40°	
14*		"	43°	40°	
15		Fog	40°	42°	
16		Clear	40°	55°	
17		Still	53°	55°	
18		"	51°	50°	
19		Gale S.—dull rain	42°	41°	
20		Cape Prince of Wales- Alaska	Strong gale S.W.	34°	40°
21			" "	33°	36°
22			Gale N.W. dull	45°	42°
23			" S.W.—dull	36°	38°
24		" S.W.—dull	38°	38°	
25		Nome City	Clear and bright	45°	65°
26	" "	" " "	45°	62°	
27	" "	" " "	55°	70°	
28	" "	" " "	62°	64°	
29	" "	" " "	60°	64°	
30	Saint Michael's	" " "	62°	73°	

* Sea ice opened.