

Wilfred the Bull

September 1968:

A five hour battle to Save "Wallowing Wilfred" took place when firemen from Cambridge and Ely were called in to help extricate him from Waterlogged washland. About 85 cattle were grazing on the hundred foot washes when Wilfred became bogged down. At 30 cwt (50.8kg) there were claims that Wilfred was Britain's largest bullock.



It was about 7 p.m. when Mt Ron Gillett of Park Farm, Little Downham, who has kept Wilfred as a pet for several years, was told of Wilfred's plight.

He rounded up some of his employees, who armed with ropes and other tackle raced to the Wash to help. It soon became obvious that more manpower was required.

By 9 p.m. the fire brigade had been alerted. A crew from Ely and the Cambridge emergency rescue squad answered the call, though the latter were unable to use their specialised equipment because of the long trek in the darkness and treacherous underfoot conditions involved in reaching the stranded Wilfred.

Part of their journey involved crossing a bridge carrying the Ely-March railway line over the Wash, and to ensure the safety of the several parties involved, passing engine drivers were



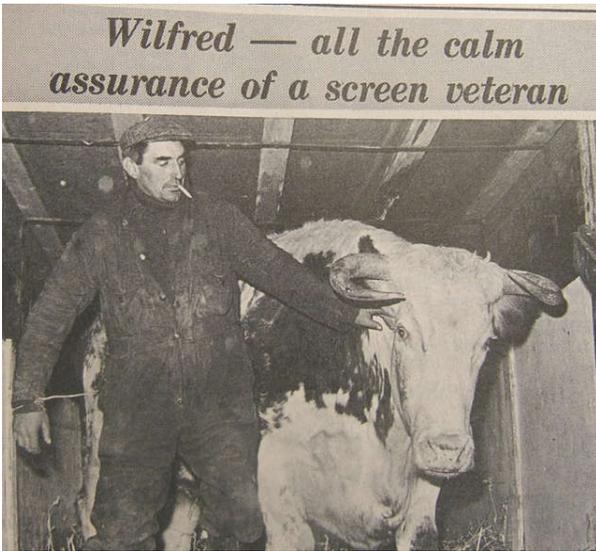
alerted before reaching the bridge. Arriving shortly before 10 p.m. after their long walk, the fireman "hitched their team" to the beleaguered bullock, and at last things started to happen. Wilfred slowly arose from the mire, where he had been embedded right up to the "chassis", and lumbered forward.

His rescuers breathed a sigh of relief, but too soon, Wilfred found another bog and sank yet again.

Finally at midnight, after a great deal more exertion on the part of all concerned, Wilfred attained a firm foothold on the river bank. There he made up for lost time and was left, to quote his owner, "tearing grass into him like a forage harvester."

This was the second time in a year that bovine trouble has hit Park farm, locally dubbed "The Ponderosa", for last year a maddened bullock had to be lassoed after a thrilling wild west chase.

This was not the end of Wilfred's adventures and in November of the same year he became a TV star:



Wilfred, the likeable heavyweight Ponderosa bullock made his television debut on BBC's Blue Peter on Monday, with all the calm assurance of a veteran TV star. The ton and a half animal was unmoved by the hectic life of a television studio as he stood tied up for five hours waiting for his turn. His owner, Mr Ron Gillett, declared proudly the following day "He stood and behaved very well."

Wilfred's next screen appearance may be on

Anglia television shortly, but Mr Gillett has high hopes that Wilfred may become a film star. Wilfred was taken to the London studio in a cattle float by farm workers David Saberton and Maurice Nicholas. An extra strong lift transported Wilfred to the second floor where he was to step into the limelight.

After his fleeting appearance with the Blue Peter trio, Wilfred left the bright lights the same night to return to his grassy kingdom at Little Downham to await news of his next appearance. According to Mr Gillett, Wilfred was his normal self. "He just seemed as if nothing special had happened," said Mr Gillett.

Robin Pearl