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# One owner's story

**M**artin Shelley became proud owner of a John Deere Lindeman BO Crawler in June 1993. He and two friends, George and Myrick Pope, went to an auction of agricultural machinery at Chartley Hall Farm, near Stafford, where he saw it in a very sorry state.

The bonnet was red rusty and the seat was just lying on the ground, but there was a far more serious problem - the left-hand steering clutch housing was broken, which meant that the crawler was a non-runner. Undeterred, Martin decided that it would make a good project but had no idea of the price it would make at auction.

## AUCTION

"I decided how much I was prepared to bid and went to join the auction," he said. "I didn't bid straight away, just stood for a few minutes listening to what was going on then bid once and the crawler was sold to me. To this day, I'm not sure whether anyone else was actually bidding."

## Martin Shelley talks to Gina Harvey about his rare JD Lindeman BO

When Martin went to pay, the auctioneer wouldn't accept a cheque so the three friends turned out their pockets and managed to put together just enough to pay for the crawler. But they literally had no cash left for anything else - "for the first weekend the three of us had equal shares in the crawler and we have all joked about it ever since!"

The crawler was taken back to Martin's father's farm at Shebdon, where the restoration would be carried out.

Martin decided to tackle the biggest job first, removing the tracks, undercarriage, drive sprockets and broken clutch housing. The cracks in the housing were ground out and he was then able to pull it back together with clamping plates and bolts.

He said: "One of the most expensive

parts of this procedure was the specialist welding rods I needed to repair the housing. This took some time as it had to be done very carefully. To help strengthen the repair, a torsion bar was made and bolted underneath the tractor between the two steering clutch housings."

Work then began on the engine and gearbox. The cylinder head and pistons were removed and found to be in good condition so, after a thorough cleaning, the engine was reassembled.

When the oil was drained from the gearbox it was quite badly contaminated with water and dirt, probably caused by the crawler standing outside. Martin removed the rear section of the gearbox, cleaned it out and checked for any other problems.

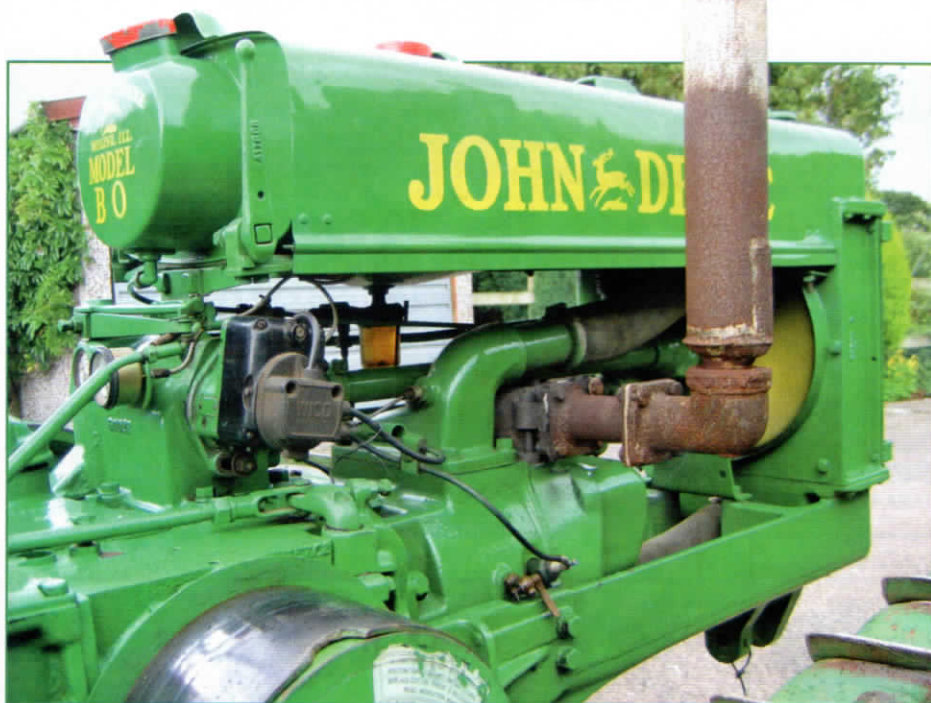
## ENGINE

With the mechanical work finished it was time to start the engine. The Lindeman crawler is fitted with a horizontal two-cylinder engine. Each cylinder has a decompression tap, which must be turned on

*Crawler tractors were popular in the fruit growing areas of the USA. The extra grip given by the tracks helped with stability on sloping ground.*







The Lindeman BO crawler was fitted with a horizontal two-cylinder petrol/kerosene engine. It was, in essence, a John Deere Model B without the wheels.

before an attempt is made to start the engine. After the fuel is turned on, the choke operating and neutral gear selected the flywheel is rotated until the engine comes on to compression. Further rotation of the flywheel should then start the engine. It is imperative to open the decompression taps as it would be extremely difficult to turn the engine by hand.

"It was quite a while before the engine would actually run and, when it did, it was misfiring badly. I traced the problem to a fault with the magneto so I took it off and had it reconditioned. Once it was refitted, the engine started and ran really well."

While the crawler was dismantled, Martin had cleaned and prepared most of the metal work, applying undercoat and a topcoat of green paint. Further coats of paint were applied after it had been reassembled.

#### IMPORT

He believes that the crawler was a recent import to the UK as, although the bonnet was covered with rust, it was only on the surface. When it had been sanded off, there was no sign of pitting which, he says, is typical of sheet metal work that has weathered in the dry American climate – "if the crawler had been in this country the damp weather would have done far more damage, the bonnet would probably have rusted away."

Many of the plates on the tracks were cracked so they were all removed and repaired where necessary. The tracks were then reassembled, painted and refitted to the tractor.

When Martin bought the crawler the front grille was missing and, since locating a new one would probably have been an impossible task, he made his own. He formed the outer frame then made the mesh section from the grille of a Fiat tractor and "was quite pleased with the end result."

He also made a small pair of mudguards for the rear of the tracks because when the operator is using the footrests his feet are only inches away from the moving tracks and sprockets – an arrangement he didn't feel safe with.

#### CLEARANCE

Martin now enjoys taking part in local ploughing matches, usually with his Fordson N, but he once tried the crawler on a practice day.

He said: "The main problem I had was a lack of ground clearance under the crawler although it isn't a problem when you are ploughing with both tracks on unploughed ground. However, when you have one or

both tracks on or in the ploughing when you are finishing off, the cross beam between the tracks and under the gearbox comes into contact with the ground and starts to bulldoze the soil underneath the crawler."

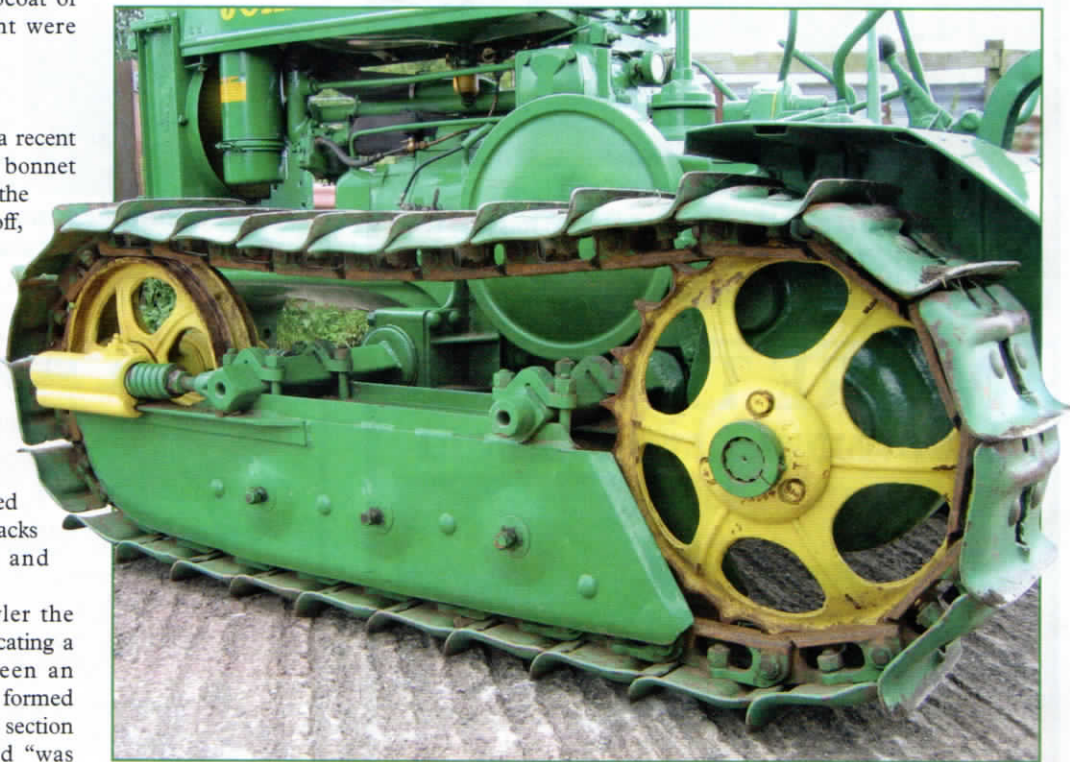
#### RARITY

The crawler attends several local shows during the summer months. Martin comments that it can be alarming when he is loading it on to his trailer as, being a short vehicle, it goes over centre very quickly when it reaches its point of balance at the top of the ramp. Also, driving in confined spaces can be difficult as it is not the easiest tractor to control.

"It wasn't until after I bought the Lindeman that I realised what a rare tractor it was as only 1,645 were manufactured between 1939 and 1947. I'm really glad that I took a fancy to it at that auction and grateful to my two friends for emptying their pockets so that I could pay for it!" *Tractor*

#### SPECIFICATION

Model	JD Lindeman BO
Y.O.M.	1944
Serial Number	336655
Produced	1939-1947
First Serial No.	329000
Last Serial No.	337514
Number made	1,645
Engine	Two-cylinder petrol
Displacement	190 cu in
Bore x Stroke	4.6in x 5.5in
Power at drawbar	11.8hp
Power at pulley	16hp
Transmission	4F x 1R
Track width	12in
Track length (ground)	49in



JD skid units were sent to the Lindeman factory, where the crawler assemblies were fitted.