

Article in [Viborg Stifts Folkeblad](#) on 29 July 2009 about [LAN R5679](#) which crashed at Grønhøj, sent from the author to [www.airmen.dk](http://www.airmen.dk) and translated by AS.

## The sky lit up when the bomber burned

### **A Lancaster bomber was shot down over Grønhøj in 1942. Gudrun Laigaard woke up when the plane was flying over Grønhøj Inn.**

*By Georg Ask Lunden Jensen*

GRØNHØJ: At about 01.22 on 25 September 1942 Gudrun Laigaard, then 22, woke up in her bedroom in Grønhøj Inn.

"I woke up because suddenly my bedroom got light. There was a very loud noise," she states. A few minutes earlier a British Avro Lancaster bomber was on the return flight to England after having dropped mines into the Baltic Sea, but here it ran out of luck. The bomber was attacked by a German night fighter piloted by Oberleutnant Elstermann from Nachtjagdgeschwader 3 and burst into flames near Grønhøj. In the house Gudrun Laigaard could hear the noise from the propeller engines of the big aircraft as it, burning, came roaring at low height over the village.

"It passed very close over the house. I nearly thought that it was going to crash here," relates Gudrun, now 89, while we sit in the old inn looking out of the window to the western outskirts of Grønhøj where the plane fell to the ground.

#### **A big crash**

The plane crashed into a field about 250 metres west of Resenfeldevej 17. It exploded on impact and all on board perished.

"A big crash rang out when it hit the ground. I went out on the road in front of the inn, and I saw the fire where the plane had crashed," she says.

But shortly afterwards German cars came rushing through the village, and she hurried back in again.

"They might have seen the crash from the airfield," she says thinking of the German air base Fliegerhorst Grove, today Flyvestation Karup - Karup Air Base.

One of the crew members had bailed out just before the crash, but the plane had come too low, so his parachute did not open up. On the following day his body was found by Marie and Edward Betzer, Mønstedvej 16. He had fallen into a hen run behind what today is Mønstedvej 18, Grønhøj.

It was reported to the Police who informed the Germans. They arrived with a truck and a coffin. The German soldiers threw the dead airman and his parachute on the truck body and clapped their hands.

On the same day Gudrun Laigaard saw that the Germans drove away with the pieces of wreckage. Of course people in the village talked about the crashed plane. A common idea was that the pilot deliberately might have tried to avoid hitting the village. The flat field and moor west of the village must have appeared as a good place for a landing, Gudrun's son Gregers Laigaard thinks. Today he is the innkeeper of Grønhøj Inn.

#### **Only loss**

Today maize grow high in the field where the plane crashed and nothing tells about the tragic night during the war.

The British plane numbered R5679 with a crew of 5 British and 2 Canadian airmen was the only aircraft of the Royal Air Force that was lost that night.

Altogether 51 Lancaster bombers flew on minelaying operations at Texel, the Frisian Islands, Heligoland and the Baltic Sea on the night before 25 September.

All members of the crew of 7 were buried in Frederikshavn on 29 September 1942.