

## AN ANNIVERSARY

On December 11, it was 70 years ago that an RAF plane carrying, among others, SOE's chief agent in Denmark, Flemming Muus, was shot down over Bonderup and St. Merløse. Muus was on his way to Denmark to help prepare the resistance movement in view of the expected allied invasion. He was saved by some brave people in the Tølløse area.

### **ST. MERLØSE**

The night before December 11 1943, a Halifax plane from the British Royal Air Force was flying over Denmark. On board were 12 boxes of explosives and hand weapons meant for the Danish resistance movement. The cargo was to be dropped east of Tissø lake. On board was also Flemming B. Muus. He was a Dane, but also a major in the British army and SOE's chief agent in Denmark. He had been in England during the fall and beginning of winter '43, where he had been involved in the plans for bringing the Danish resistance movement into shape so that it might be of help during the expected Allied invasion. The British crew was told that they would be taking Muus with them to Denmark only a very short time before the Halifax took off from the Tempsford base in England. Flemming B. Muus was supposed to parachute down near the hill of Gyldenløves Høj between Kirke Hvalsø and Jystrup.

### **Spotted by a German fighter plane**

Shortly before 2 am, the RAF plane was spotted by a German night fighter which started shooting. The right wing of the Halifax was ripped up by machine gun fire, one of the engines caught fire, and the other engine cut out. The crew, and probably especially captain Peter Barter, fought to put the plane more or less safely on the ground. It landed in a frozen field near the farm of Bonderupgård in the vicinity of St. Merløse. It was lucky the furrows were ploughed in the right direction, the crew later said. The plane came to a halt shortly before a marl pit. The crew managed to escape from the burning Halifax and separated into two groups. One group went northwest towards Tuse, the other northeast towards Roskilde. The group fleeing to the northwest received help from brave locals and was rescued by being sent to Sweden, while the group fleeing to the east was denounced and ended up as German war prisoners.

### **Bicycling in Sorø**

Flemming B. Muus was not in any of the groups. After the crash, he fled towards Bonderupgård but was frightened by a barking dog. He ran over the frozen moor towards Vanløse Huse and was taken in and hidden by Frederik Jensen who had seen the air combat together with his wife. Muus spent the night in the hay loft. He bought Frederik Jensen's son's bicycle, biked to Sorø, caught the train to Copenhagen and was saved. On Wednesday December 11 it was, therefore, 70 years ago that the Halifax plane was shot down and landed in the field near Bonderup. At this occasion, two Englishmen and a group of Danes met in the narrow road of Bonderup Allé. The Englishmen were Nigel Atkins and his son, Jean Marc. Nigel Atkins' father - and thus Jean Marc's grandfather - Brian Atkins, was one of the members of the Halifax' crew. He was the plane's 2nd pilot. The other people present in Bonderup Allé were relatives of those who participated in helping the British crew in 1943, representatives of Holbæk Museum, and Jan Christensen from Næstved who is writing a book about another downing of an RAF plane on Sjælland, at Allindemagle in August 1944. To the rendezvous in Bonderup Allé they had brought photos and maps to find the exact spot where Brian Atkins and the rest of the crew crash-landed.

### **Photos for the museum**

After the meeting in Bonderup, the party continued to Holbæk Museum, all the while discussing what happened in those December days. Nigel Atkins presented several objects to Holbæk Museum and had the opportunity to discover the museum's collection of memorabilia from the Occupation, among which one tyre from the Halifax plane from the field near Bonderup. The museum was given photos of Brian Atkins and of Ralph Briggs, Bill Howell, Sydney Smith, Joe Fry, Peter Barter and Nick Anderson, who were on board the aircraft.

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