

## In a quarter of an hour a German night fighter shot down three Lancaster bombers.

(This is a translation of the article in Danish received from Jørgen Jørgensen with his comments)

In 1982 reporter Jørgen Larsen wrote in the Jydske Tidende about the shooting down of 3 Lancaster bombers over South Jutland. On 18 August 1943 they were on the return flight from a bombing raid on the German Experimental Station for V1 and V2 rockets at Peenemünde. Jørgen Larsen had the account mentioned below from the German night fighter pilot Oberleutnant Hans Meisner who flew a Messerschmitt Bf 110G4 from 2<sup>nd</sup> Group of Nachtjagergeschwader 3, Jagel Airfield near Schleswig. It has not been possible to trace the origin of this account. Jørgen Larsen wrote in his article, "Just in these days (1982) an account about the shooting down of the bombers has been published."



**Oberleutnant Hans Meisner in his Bf. 110 G4**

**Lancaster JA 851 and JA 691, No 49 Sqdn, and EE 117, No 619 Sqdn.**

Just in these days (1982) an account about the shooting down of those bombers has been published. The pilot of the German nightfighter, Oberleutnant Hans Meisner, tells:

"We were scrambled at 02.15 on the 18<sup>th</sup> of August and sent to the area of radar station Ameise in the south eastern part of Jutland near Barsmark in Løjt Land. We were lucky to be placed just in the stream of returning bombers. But unfortunately the radio was jammed and we did not get contact to Ameise, so we did not get any information. We climbed to 11,000 feet and came near to Aabenraa Fjord. My radaroperator, Unteroffizier Josef Krinner, had several contacts on his scope, but they passed so quickly, that we thought it was "Window" (strips of tin foil to mislead the radar operators). As the contacts were below us, I dived and opened up the throttles.

At 02.54 I saw the first Lancaster just ahead of us at about 10,000 feet. I flew nearer and fired from about 150 feet. I was a bit to the right and 150 feet lower. No. three engine caught fire. As I broke away under the bomber the rear gunner gave me a burst, but a bit to the left, and he did not hit me. From the beginning of the attack both aircraft were in the German searchlights. As the Lancaster tried to escape in a turn down to the left it placed itself just in my sight, and I gave it another burst. The Lancaster had got it and crashed on the ground a few hundred metres from the fjord. (That was **JA 851**).

I turned east as the observer had got another contact, Meisner tells. I descended a little and saw a Lancaster over me heading west. As the weather was clear I could still see him as I made a steep turn to the west. I gave him a burst from the same position as before, and again No. three engine caught fire. He went down and crashed near Aabenraa Fjord at 03.01. (That was **JA 691**).

I turned to the north and the observer got a new victim on his scope. I saw him in a distance of about 1200 metres. My first attack was just as the other two, 150 feet behind, 150 feet lower and a bit to the right. As No. 3 engine caught fire we were caught by a searchlight. In spite of the moonlight I got blinded. The Lancaster pilot pulled up his aircraft. Maybe he too got blinded, maybe he tried to slow down in this way to give his crew a better chance to bale out. The bomber filled all my sight. I pulled up, and from about 20 metres I fired. After a very short burst No. 2 engine and the fuselage caught fire. The aircraft blew up and crashed at 03.11 about 2 km east of Ustrup. (That was Lancaster **EE 117**).

As the bomber blew up our Bf 110 was hit by pieces of wreckage and thick, black oil from the Lancaster. We had to break off and return to Jagel. The aircraft landed with some difficulty at 03.30."

Jørgen Larsen ended his article explaining the two German systems for controlling night fighters. Radar was used in the "Himmelbett" system. In "Wilde Sau" the night fighters shot down planes that were caught in the cones of searchlights.

The first plane, JA 851 of No. 49 Squadron, hit the beach near Hellesøgaard on the island of Als. Long marks from the plane and two flaps were found in a field near the beach. The plane ended up 500 metres from the coast at a depth of about 30 metres. The wreckage burned under water for more than an hour while a German naval vessel was searching for survivors. One airman was found killed in a field of the farm Stenbæk. On 21 August 1943 he was buried in Aabenraa Cemetery together with the crews of JA691 and EE117. On 16 September 1943 another airman, Pilot P/O T. E. Tomlin, DFC, was found washed ashore on the beach near Halk. An eye witness saw an airman leave the Lancaster via the escape hatch above the cockpit. His parachute opened up too early and it got stuck on the tail plane. So it can be said with certainty that two airmen from this crew have been found. Only P/O T. E. Tomlin's headstone is found in Aabenraa Cemetery. On 20 September 1943 he was buried without ecclesiastical assistance.

The second plane, JA 691 of No. 49 Squadron, exploded in the air and crashed near Barsø Landing in Løjtland. The eye witness Rasmus Jensen, then 15 years old, saw three large burning pieces of wreckage and a number of smaller pieces of wreckage falling to the ground. Some hours later he went to the crash site. The perished crew members were lying near the gate to a field partially covered with a tarpaulin. Many onlookers had come to the site. Then the German night fighter pilot Hans Meisner and his observer Josef Krinner arrived. One of the onlookers, a man from the German minority known for his sympathy with the Germans, kicked one of the bodies with the words, "Der verdammte englische Schweinehund!" (Damned English Swine!) Meisner turned around and hit the man in his face with the back of his hand, so that he tumbled to the ground. "Nein!" Meisner stated, "ein fährer Gegner!" (No! A fair adversary!) All of the killed crew of seven airmen were buried in Aabenraa Cemetery.

The third plane, EE 117 of No. 619 Squadron, disintegrated in the air and crashed near Ustrup east of Over Jerstal. All of the 8 crew members including the Squadron Leader suffered a violent death. Parts of bodies were scattered in the field. They were picked up and placed in four coffins. On 21 August 1943 they were buried in Aabenraa together with the crew of JA 691 and an airman from JA 851. A beautiful memorial garden with a memorial stone was placed near the crash site in Ustrup.

Malcolm Brooke, Detmoldt, inspector of schools for children of personnel of the British armed forces abroad, has carried out a comprehensive investigation around JA 691 that crashed near Barsø. On a holiday trip to Denmark he saw the memorial stone in Løjtland. That triggered him to investigate the background. His account is on the internet.

See [The Loss of Lancaster JA691](#) by Malcolm Brooke on [www.BomberHistory.co.uk](http://www.BomberHistory.co.uk).

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