



• David Strachan and wife Lorraine stand under the propeller that belonged to David's aircraft he was shot down in.

Veteran fighter relives crash

World War II fighter pilot David Strachan was in Alice Springs last week and dropped into the RSL to see the remains of the aircraft he flew in the 1940s.

Strachan, 67, was stationed just south of Darwin with 31 Squadron during the war.

His plane was shot at by a Japanese fuel barge which forced him to crash-land on Cartier Island, about 400 km north west of Darwin.

He was in Alice Springs last week before attending the squadron's reunion in Darwin later this month.

Strachan said his plane was an "A19156" and his propeller at the RSL looks like it has been blasted with Japanese gunfire.

But it has been corroded by saltwater on Cartier Island.

It was April 6, 1944 when Strachan was flying with 31 Squadron.

"Our duty was to attack Japanese shipping around Darwin and on the way out, I saw to my right what appeared to be an island, and on a

By DAVID LIDDLE

second glance it had a hard angle to it, it happened to be a Japanese 160 tonne fuel barge," he said.

"I called to Commanding Officer Darcy 'Hey Darcy, I got a target'. 'Darcy replied: 'No, I'll take it, where is it'.

"Then I said 'you bastard' but he took it.

"He fired on it. I was a bit annoyed about this and thought it was my target so I thought I'd have a go too.

"This was pretty foolish because as I passed over the vessel it blew up.

"It created a pretty strong impact and there was another noise which was a 20 mm shell hitting my star-board engine.

"I can still hear someone saying 'Dave's had it' but they were wrong."

Strachan was directed to Cartier Island by the other fighters where he successfully crash-landed.

"That was quite a dramatic day," he recalled.

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