

STAR OF COURAGE (SC)

The late Pilot Officer James Wallace HOCKING,
Nambour Qld 4560

In the early morning of 28 July 1944, Royal Australian Air Force Pilot Officer James Hocking, who was then 21 years of age and on attachment with the Royal Air Force, piloted a stricken bomber aircraft away from a village in Cambridgeshire, England.

Pilot Officer Hocking was captaining a Stirling Bomber aircraft during a night cross country training flight near March. As the bomber flew over East Anglia, flames were seen coming out of the inner starboard engine and Pilot Officer Hocking advised his crew that he was going to feather the engine and return to RAF Wrattling Common air base.

The aircraft began to lose power on all engines and Pilot Officer Hocking ordered the crew to stand-by and don their parachutes. The aircraft subsequently began to shudder violently so he ordered the crew of six men to abandon the aircraft.

The Mid-Upper Gunner went to see if Pilot Officer Hocking was coming and observed that he was half way out of his seat. Realising that the aircraft was about to crash into the populated township of March he ordered the Gunner to leave the aircraft whilst he struggled with the controls. With the crew safely out of the aircraft Pilot Officer Hocking managed to fly the bomber beyond the township before it crashed in a nearby field.

Sadly, Pilot Officer Hocking was killed on impact.

By his actions, Pilot Officer Hocking displayed conspicuous courage.