

Gnr. A Grantham – Royal Artillery

Arthur Grantham was born on 20th December 1920, the son of James and Ellen Grantham of Westcott Street.

In 1944 Arthur Grantham was serving in 105 Anti-Tank Regiment, Royal Artillery. The regiment had been formed in Palestine in 1942 as a unit of XIII Corps which was part of the Eighth Army in North Africa under General Montgomery. In July 1943 the Corps took part in the invasion of Sicily, followed in September 1943 by Operation Baytown, the invasion of the Italian mainland across the Straits of Messina. It was hoped this operation would draw German forces out from their strong defensive positions further north, but in this respect it did not succeed.

Having gained their foothold on the mainland, XIII Corps advanced north along the Adriatic Coast until May 1944 when it was moved to the left-centre of the Allied Front. Elements of the Corps crossed the Garigliano and Rapido Rivers and broke the German defences in the Liri Valley, a victory of great significance as it by-passed the German defences of the Gothic Line and led to the fall of Rome on 3rd June.

The Allied advance continued northwards but stopped when the Germans made a stand near Lake Bolsena, midway between Rome and Siena. The ensuing battle for the Trasimene Line lasted from 20th to 30th June and was centred on a fiercely determined tank action between the 6th South African Armoured Division and the Herman Goering Panzer Division. Eventually the Allies broke through and were able to continue north.

Arthur Grantham died on 25th June 1944 and is buried in Bolsena War Cemetery which contains the graves of 557 casualties, half of whom are South African soldiers who lost their lives in the battle. We do not know the circumstances of Arthur Grantham's death but it is evident that he was either killed during the action or died of wounds shortly afterwards.

In August 1944 XIII Corps was transferred to the US Army to continue the campaign in the Appennine mountains until January 1945. The Corps then rejoined the Eighth Army to continue into northern Italy until the German surrender in May 1945.