

## With the British Army in Sfax

(from The Iron Phantom of the Desert, by Joseph Ellison  
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/ww2peopleswar/stories/72/a4858572.shtml> )

After a few day's rest we were on the move again to Tunisia to a place called Medenine then pushed on to our next stop which was called Sousse. Ten days before, there had been a big tank battle and the evidence was lying all around us. There were hundreds of burnt out tanks and vehicles of the enemy; also of our own. Once again it made me think of my own mates who I would never see again as a result of that battle.

The next stop was Sfax where we stayed for a few weeks. We had arrived at night and in pitch darkness and we did not know where we were so we pitched our tent beside some small bushes, as we thought. The next morning when daylight came and we went outside to have a look around we found that we had pitched it right beside someone's grapevines. It didn't take us long to help ourselves to the bunches of grapes but we had to be very careful as the Germans had left booby traps all over the place. For instance, someone had dug a trench about six feet deep and two feet wide and the length about 20 feet. Whoever had done had left a pole resting on some trestles the length of the trench they had dug, and that was our latrine. I had to go to the latrine, and, being a hawk-eye, I noticed that there was a cable stretching across the entrance just about an inch above the ground. I sent for my mate who was a senior sergeant, and informed him of what I'd found. We carefully moved the soil away from where the cable entered the ground and we found that it was attached to 12 hand grenades. If anyone had pulled it, the pins would have been pulled out and it would have caused a lot of trouble, not to mention the injuries to anyone beside it.

After that, the whole place was checked for booby traps, some others involving walking sticks, a football, a bar of chocolate, and a hand torch, there were lots of things set up. There were some Bedouins camping nearby and one of their children had his hand blown off as he picked up what he thought was a bar of chocolate. We rushed him to the nearest army casualty station and after that we were very careful where we walked in case we stood on any more booby traps. The mother of the child who had been injured was very thankful for what we had done and showed her appreciation by giving me a chain and medallion. She said she had nothing else to give me but she thanked me for what I had done for her child.