by the 60th Rifles, forward elements of the Eighth Army had bitten deep into Cyrenaica on the heels of the fleeing Afrika Korps. General Pienaar's South Africans marched into Tobruk on November 13, and avenged Rommel's capture of the Second South African Division there some months previously. In three weeks the Eighth Army had pushed onwards for 300 miles, and, although slowed up by winter rains, occupied Benghasi on November 20.

After a regrouping in front of El Agheila, where Rommel had prepared a trap, but wisely decided in the event not to stand and fight, progress along the Tripolitanian coastal road was resumed. The first fortnight in January was given up to new preparations for an assault against the Wadi Zemzem positions, launched on January 15. Success here opened the way to Tripoli, which General Montgomery entered on the morning of January 23, after pushing the enemy back 1,350 miles in eighty days.

From this moment the story of the Eighth Army merges with that of the British and American forces advancing from Algeria in the battle for Tunisia, General Sir Harold Alexander, now commander of the Allied forces in Italy, assuming command of both converging army groups. Armoured cars of General Montgomery's advance guard crossed from Libya into Tunisia six days after the fall of Tripoli, and the Eighth Army prepared to force the Mareth Line.

Once again its leader began that period of careful consolidation without which he has never attacked. Rommel's counter-offensive early in March was beaten back, and on the night of March 20–21, the Eighth Army launched a full-scale assault on the Mareth Line from Medenine to the sea. A bridgehead was established after thirty-six hours of " fighting more intense than anything in the Battle of Egypt," and the Mareth Line was ultimately broken, after an immortal stand by the 50th (Northumbrian) Division against the whole weight of the Fifteenth Panzers.

A savage fight was necessary before the Seaforths and the Camerons carried the Wadi Akarit positions at the point of the bayonet, and made possible the junction with the Amercan 2nd Corps on April 7, midway between Gafsa and Gabes. Troops from the Home Counties showed up especially well in this phase of the fighting towards Sfax, which fell on the morning of April 10, after an advance of 75 miles from the Wadi Akarit in four days. It was here that General Montgomery issued his famous Order of the Day, " Forward to Tunis and drive the enemy into the sea ! " but heavy fighting was to take place before the Enfidaville Line was smashed.

The nature of the coastal gap and the massing of strong German forces in front of the Eighth Army prevented it from reaching Tunis in the vanguard, but in the wider strategical picture the German expectation that the main attack would come from General Montgomery, enabled General Alexander to make dispositions which facilitated the occupation of Tunis and Bizerta. Even so, the surrender of the 15th Panzers was made to their old adversaries of the 7th Armoured Division, and the Eighth Army played a prominent part until the last · day's fighting in the Cape Bon Peninsula on May 12. Since the crossing of the Tunisian border, the Army had suffered 11,500 casualties.

The Eighth Army's next exploit was to participate in the initial invasion of Sicily. On July 10 the desert-trained troops undertook a new type of operation by landing from the sea and swiftly occupying Syracuse. This time the Eighth Army included not only the Northumbrian and Highland divisions, but the British 5th Division and nine Canadian regiments. After rapidly pushing on to the Monte Lauro massif overlooking the plain of Catania they encountered the crack Hermann Goering and Fifteenth Panzer divisions above Augusta. Bitter fighting slowed up progress towards Catania, and the town did not fall until August 5. The task of the Eighth Army was to hold and extend the Catalanian hinge against the best German troops while other Allied forces swept across the northern part of the island. On August 9 General Montgomery's men linked up with the American