

Professor Dominick Graham

Professor Dominick Graham, who has died aged 92, was the co-author of a classic work on artillery in the two world wars.

Dominick ('Toby') Graham

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Graham's collaborator was Brigadier Shelford Bidwell, whom he first met in the bar at Sandhurst after a lively seminar discussing whether massed artillery had caused a deadlock on the Western Front. A publisher standing alongside them commissioned them to produce a book.

Graham lived in Canada, Bidwell in England, and having to exchange chapters by post was a complication. But they never fell out, and managed to meet when Graham was in England on vacation from the University of New Brunswick, where he was director of military history.

Their book *Fire-Power* (1982) described the evolution in military thinking from the early 20th century. Tracing developments in training, machine guns, wireless and air power, they showed how, in the First World War, skilfully directed artillery was not just an extra wheel in the war machine but a vital element when used in conjunction with other arms. The authors followed this highly original work with *Tug of War* (1986), a lively narrative of the Italian campaign from 1943 to 1945 which contained vivid biographical sketches of the commanders and drew on Graham's personal examination of the terrain at Monte Cassino.

Their last joint effort was *Coalitions, Politicians and Generals* (1993), in which Graham did the bulk of the writing and Bidwell, as editor, drew on his experience as deputy director of the Royal United Services Institute. They offered a stimulating commentary on the British, French and German staff systems, and compared the political pressure applied by Lloyd George on Haig and by General George Marshall on Eisenhower.

Dominick Stuart Graham was born into a naval and military family on July 24 1920. Always known as "Toby" (because when he was a baby his family thought he looked like the dog in *Punch and Judy*), he went to Bradfield and then the Royal Military Academy Woolwich. In 1940 he was sent to Narvik to command an anti-aircraft battery; he was wounded while rescuing a gun detachment on an airfield during an air raid.

Graham next commanded the same guns during the Battle of Britain at Dover. Eighteen months later he was on patrol outside Tobruk in North Africa when his observation car was hit, and he plodded through the desert for two days in the desert before being captured.

His first attempt to escape — through a sewer, from Chieti camp in Italy — was foiled by a fire. Soon he was transferred to Fontanellato, from which he got out for a day, only to be caught at a railway station. On being freed after the Italian armistice in September 1943, he set out to join up with the Allied armies.

In *Escapes and Evasions of an Obstinate Bastard* (2000), Graham described how he wore peasants' clothes and a scarecrow's hat while walking for six weeks around and over steep mountains, lodging in barns and shepherds' huts while being fed by Italian sympathisers. He was fired at several times by Germans scouring the woods for food and escapers before finally being escorted with a party of 17 by a drunken guide to a village near Ortona, where a Canadian patrol found him being shaved in a barber's chair.

On February 16 1945 Graham was commanding a battery with the Guards Armoured Division in north-west Europe when he went forward to replace a wounded forward observation officer shortly before an enemy counterattack. As the German pounding increased, he received a shell splinter in his arm, but continued to direct defensive fire on his wireless, reporting his injury only after the first attack had been repelled. When a relief officer failed to reach him, he refused to be evacuated for four hours.

The citation for his MC declared that his disregard for his safety, and his calmness while giving concise orders under heavy fire, enabled more enemy counterattacks to be repelled and a successful thrust to be made by the 5th Coldstreams.

After the war Graham became an instructor at Sandhurst, a staff officer in Germany with 6th Armoured Division and commanded the first British missile battery. He was also a member of the British cross-country skiing team at the Winter Olympics at Cortina in 1956. Then, fed up with peacetime soldiering, he emigrated to New Brunswick, where he started a cross-country ski club, fished for salmon on the Miramichi river and shot partridge in the woods.

His first job was as a maths teacher at St John High School. But his keen military interest led him to take a degree in History at the University of New Brunswick and then earn a PhD at London University before joining the staff at UNB, where his initiative in demonstrating the relevance of history to sceptical Canadian bureaucrats led to the founding of the Centre for Conflict Studies in 1980. He could be withering with anyone who had never looked down the sights of a 77mm artillery piece.

His other books included a small work on Monte Cassino (1970) and *The Price of Command* (1993), a life of Guy Simonds, Canada's most distinguished general.

After the break-up of Graham's first marriage, to Valerie Greig (with whom he had two daughters), he resigned his academic post. He was 17,000ft up K2 in the Himalayas the day he was appointed professor emeritus.

Graham then married his childhood sweetheart, Mary Hawson, and settled in Yorkshire to work on her family estate and gardens. When she died he took a container ship to visit his daughter in New Zealand; the only other passenger was Ursula Behringer, and they married in 2002.

Every year Graham went to London for the annual lunch of the San Martino Trust, which brings 20 young Italians to Britain in thanks for the wartime aid given to Allied escapers. When he was no longer able to make the journey he alarmed friends by vanishing from his Co Durham care home, but was eventually found lunching at the Army and Navy Club in London.

Professor Dominick Graham, born July 24 1920, died March 8 2013

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