

Revealed: Secrets of 1914 Christmas truce

By **Martin Stote**

IT WAS one of the most poignant moments of the Great War – with British and German soldiers emerging from the trenches to share a fleeting peace.

And now one of the architects of the First World War's Christmas Day truce has been revealed in a new account.

Captain Robert Hamilton, of the 1st battalion Royal Warwickshire regiment, was at the heart of those magical few hours.

His grandson, former history teacher Andrew Hamilton, was inspired to collate his relative's diary and other illustrations and documents after his daughter visited the battlefields with her school.

He and historian Alan Reed have drawn on more than 100 photographs, cartoons, maps and sketches to write a book.

Mr Hamilton's daughter Alice took the diary with her on a school trip to the battlefields of France and Belgium.

Mr Reed was one of the tour organisers. "She gave him the diary to look at.

"We found we both shared a deep interest in the First World War and agreed to research my



The truce illustrated in this cartoon was also recorded by Captain Robert Hamilton, left, in his diary, below



grandfather's experiences." Mr Hamilton from Walton, Warwickshire, said yesterday.

"For me it was fascinating following my grandfather's campaign footsteps and pinpointing the exact spot where he met a German officer, two miles from the Belgian hamlet

of St Yvon on Christmas Day." Writing in his small, leather-bound journal for December 25, 1914, Captain Hamilton wrote: "A day unique in the world's history. I met this officer and we arranged a local armistice for 48 hours."

He added: "The soldiers on

both sides met in their hundreds and exchanged greetings and gifts."

Captain Hamilton returned to England in 1915 after being made deaf by shell fire.

The book, *Meet at Dawn, Unarmed*, has just been published.