



Charting a century of change

WE'VE all sat through history lessons, trawled through text books full of dates and learned about wars, treaties and battles; but it's easy to forget as we digest the facts that people just like us lived through these events, and that history doesn't necessarily mean the far distant past.

The Great Baddow Oral History, now on a second print run, has brought together the reminiscences of inhabitants of the village past and present, to produce a picture of life in the last century; and as it does, to show how much has changed, both physically and socially.

Undertaken by a team of nine amateur

historians from the Baddow and Galleywood University of the Third Age Local History Group, and encouraged by an Oral History initiative launched by the Essex Record Office, the book includes chapters on shops and businesses, farming, village life and wartime experiences.

Did you know, for example, that bombs fell on the village during the war? One contributor remembered finding bits of incendiary bombs, collecting and hiding them: "I suppose it was a big dangerous," he says, "but interesting to us as boys."

And in these 20th century days of out-of-town mega stores, it's a surprise to discover that Great Baddow once had a thriving shopping area including a fishmongers, a butchers with its own abattoir, a cobblers shop

owned by a small man who had to stand on a box to see over the counter, and a high class provision and clothing business.

As Allen Buckroyd who compiled the book says: "Oral history makes people feel close to the past – and brings it to life."

So, if you want to bring the past to life and find out about the Great Baddow flood of 1958 from people who were there, discover how much a woman's work really has changed, or see what the village looked like in 1900, then take a trip through this oral history, and feel like you were there, too.

■ Copies of the book can be obtained from outlets including Chelmsford Library, Great Baddow Library, and from Allen Buckroyd: Allen.Buckroyd@hemscott.net. *Chris Penhall*