Grove ward

The Tom Cruise and Nicole Kidman film Far and Away culminates in a re-enactment of the Oklahoma Land Rush - where settlers could acquire 160 acres of land, essentially for free, by racing to a staked flag first.

The development of The Grove - or, more accurately, Bradmore Field - was not all that dissimilar, though speculators had to pay-up to build the grid of tightly packed terraced streets that are now called Brackenbury Village.

Where is this grove? Although no part of the area today resembles a grove, it is actually a clearly defined area: east of Paddenswick Road, west of the Hammersmith and City Line, north of Glenthorne Road and South of Goldhawk Road.

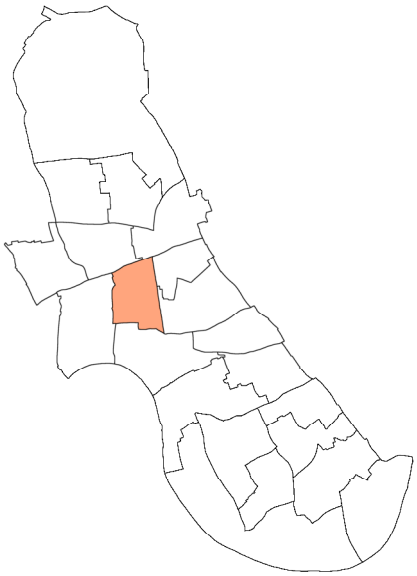
Askew Road follows the route of a tributary of Stamford Brook as it flows northwards, and what is now Paddenswick Road and Dalling Road do the same to the south: the brook's irrigation of Bradmore Field is why it became such a verdant grove.

Just as the bulk of Shepherd's Bush between Uxbridge Road and Goldhawk Road was developed very rapidly in the late 1800s, so too was this section of central Hammersmith. But The Grove itself - the road now called Hammersmith Grove - is older.

The founding electoral ward for this area was named "The Grove and Ravenscourt". This literally meant Ravenscourt, plus the road called The Grove, and precious little in between, at least for a few years.

Hammersmith Grove was marked on Rocque's map as far back as the 1780s - but just as a track or rural lane; no housing. Several Hammersmith & Fulham wards are associated with historically significant people: William Morris with Ravenscourt, Joseph Addison with Addison, James Gunter and Samuel Richardson with Avonmore, William Gibbs with West Kensington, Nell Gwynne with Sandford, William De Morgan with Sands End, John Dwight with Fulham Town, Sir John Lillie with, well, Lillie Road. For Grove, the central ward in Hammersmith, its patron is the builder George Wimpey, founder of the now multinational conglomerate construction firm.

Wimpey was born in Brook Green in 1855 and, as an adult, built a stone foundry here. Although his successful company principally focussed on road-laying he also had a significant interest in developing land for housing in Hammersmith.



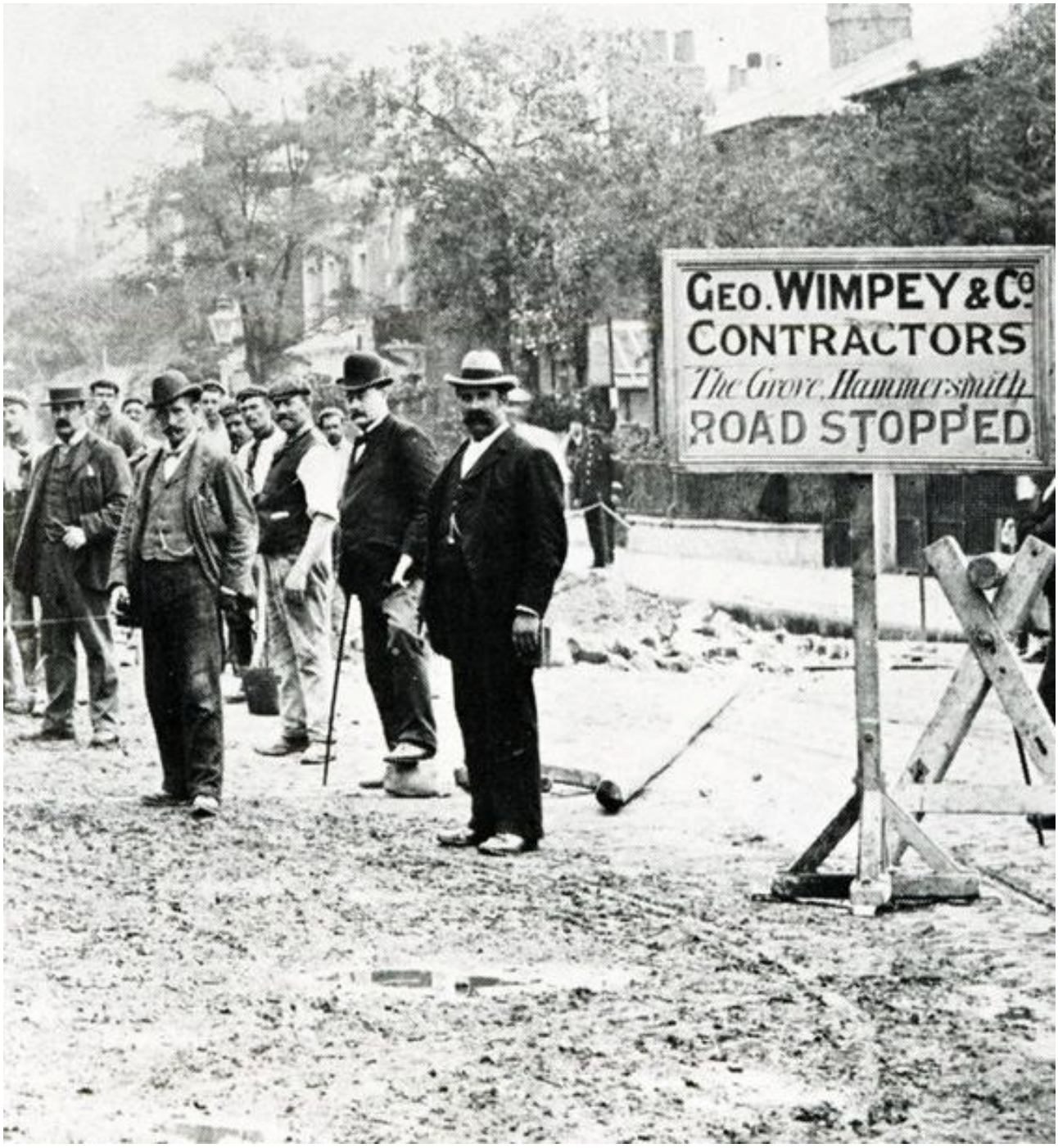
He constructed a sizeable chunk of Hammersmith Grove, where he eventually lived and where the Wimpey Headquarters were based. He also built the White City Stadium and much of the White City Exhibition site.

Wimpey did not construct the whole of Hammersmith Grove. Housebuilding here started before he was born in the 1840s and, even if he had been in a position to pitch for land it is too long a road for one builder at that time to have constructed: it's almost a kilometre in length.

There was almost feral competition to buy-up plots to help house a rapidly growing Hammersmith. The Council's Conservation Team parcel Hammersmith Grove into five distinct clusters of approximately similar architecture built in roughly the same time periods.

While Hammersmith Grove was being developed the Hammersmith and City railway came to Hammersmith. The line spliced central Hammersmith in two: just one narrow road: Trussley Road, now connected Brook Green in the east with the rest of Hammersmith west of The Grove.

The line was also an even more prominent physical feature than it is today because, while today's Piccadilly and District Lines slip under Beadon Road, when it was first built these lines were connected to the Hammersmith and City Line by a bridge over the southern end of Hammersmith Grove. There was a further connection to the West London Line where Richford Gate now is - arcing around just south of Shepherd's Bush Green.



Some of the early houses built along Hammersmith Grove were grand villas located in an almost rural idyll. But many more became multiple occupancy dwellings; and the streets gradually built west of The Grove were also high density, tightly packed and far more targeted at Hammersmith's burgeoning working class.

Not Hammersmith's poor but men who worked with their hands in decent trades who were not especially affluent but could afford reasonably decent accommodation close to their work. Hammersmith therefore was "zoned" pretty early in its existence: there were the wealthy enclaves of Ravenscourt and Brook Green; the working class in Bradmore Park and The Grove, and the poorest, most overcrowded area south of Glenthorne Road.

The area was not completely given over to housing: Godolphin and Latymer School established itself here in the late 19th century; and just beyond it at the end of Cambridge Grove were the Bradmore works: originally a piano factory and then the site of the Alliance Aeroplane Company. Further on it became the council's Education Department building and is now office space.

The Grove and Ravenscourt ward was, after Brook Green and St Matthew's the strongest Conservative (Moderate, Municipal Reform or Ratepayer) ward in Hammersmith. I've linked those three together but the Ratepayer's Association was not always aligned with the Conservatives, and in the early days often had the implicit support of Hammersmith's Liberals too.

Labour managed to get two councillors elected here in 1919 including the wonderfully-named Wellington Harding but were then unable to win again for almost two decades, when they won three of the six seats in 1937. Then they finally got full control of the ward in 1945.

After that, Ravenscourt and Grove were split into separate wards. Grove now just covered the area of Bradmore Field from Paddenswick Road to the railway and, shorn of the much more Conservative area around

Ravenscourt Park, began electing Labour councillors consistently and comfortably.

In 1949 - a relatively poor Labour year, though one in which they still kept control of Hammersmith, Grove voted 56% Labour to 44% Conservative. Stand-alone Ravenscourt, meanwhile, voted 63% Conservative to 37% Labour. And that's how they split for the rest of that borough's existence: Grove relatively comfortably Labour, Ravenscourt even more comfortably Conservative.

How Grove ward behaved later on, as it gentrified and got renamed by some "Brackenbury Village", raises the question why Hammersmith wards behave differenly politically to those in Fulham. If Grove had been a Fulham ward it would probably have been represented by Conservative councillors from the late 1970s to at least 2018. But it stuck with Labour when the boroughs amalgamated in 1964 right the way through to its abolition in 2002 - even with, at times, knife-edge majorities.

Compare Grove to what might be called its sister ward in Fulham: Sherbrooke - a ward that, like Grove, had very little public housing; was, in the main, a tightly packed grid of terraces of workers cottages and had, in fact, a far, far stronger Labour pedigree than Grove. Labour's vote in Sherbrooke in the 1960s and 1970s surpassed 80%.

Those are the similarities - here is the difference: Fulham gentrified earlier than Hammersmith, but the lag was not so great as to explain why, between 1974 and 1978, Sherbrooke swung to the Conservatives by 22% but Grove by just 5.5% (and that tiny swing despite Grove losing the Flora Gardens council estate in 1978 boundary changes). In 1982, Sherbrooke swung from Labour again by over five percentage points - enabling the Conservatives to snatch one of its seats; in Grove the swing was 0.2%.

That's not to say Labour was untouchable in Grove: they won in 1978 by just 20 votes and in 1982 by 26. They just didn't turn against Labour to the same extent as Fulham wards like Sherbrooke, did.

In 1990, after rate-swaps and big rate rises, the Sherbrooke swing from Labour was ten points - giving the Conservatives both seats there for the first time; in Grove it was 4.5% - one of two crucial Hammersmith wards Labour held in that election to keep them in control of the council (the other being Starch Green). Labour held on by 125 votes here that time.

By 1990, Grove was gentrifying at a far faster rate than Sherbrooke. it was these streets that were talked about whenever Hammersmith was mooted by estate agents as potential future homes for young couples looking for their first home or their first family home: the cottages of Iffley Road, Atwood Road or Cardross Street; the townhouses of Adie, Benbow and Overstone Roads and Brackenbury Road itself with its evolving cafe culture down the end with Aldensley.

The political divergence with Sherbrooke continued. A Grove ward by-election in 1992 resulted in not far off a Labour landslide : over 60% of the vote, and in 1994, Grove swung to Labour by six points; Sherbrooke by one. Now Grove had a Labour majority of 500; Sherbrooke was a split ward with the Conservatives narrowly ahead.



Clark quits as Labour boss

CLLR Stephen Clark is to stand down as Hammersmith Council's Labour leader.

Mr Clark, 36, who became a father in April, has told colleagues he is resigning because of increased family commitments.

He has been leader of the Labour opposition since the council elections in May 1982 and was returned unopposed in May this year.

He said: "I enjoy the job immensely but I believe I owe it to my family to spend a little more time at home than the job of leader will allow.

"I still intend to be an energetic councillor both at the Town hall and in my ward and I will assist the new leader in whatever way I can."

Elections for the vacant post will be held in mid-January and front-runners are thought to include deputy leader Gordon Prentice and opposition housing spokesman Ian Harrison.

Mr Clark is councillor for Grove ward and lives with his wife and son in Standish Road, Hammersmith.

● Cllr Stephen Clark


RICHFORD ST
BENBOW ROAD
BRACKENBURY ROAD
COULTER RD
AGATE ROAD
HAMMERSMITH GROVE
CARTHEW RD
NASMYTH ST
IFFLEY ROAD
OVERSTONE RD
BANIM STREET
ATWOOD RD
GLENTHORNE RD

Then examine the Conservative vote, which in Grove went from 43% in 1978 to the low thirties in the 1980s and 1990s before falling below 30% in 1998. In Sherbrooke, with the exception of a slight dip in 1986, the Conservative vote was consistently in the high forties from 1978 to 1998, even as this period coincided with increasingly unpopular mid-term Tory governments.

So part of the reason for Grove's Labour lean was a lag in gentrification, and another part was that Labour was able to ride the wave of Conservative government unpopularity in the 1980s far more easily in Hammersmith than Fulham because of that difference in speed of gentrification.

A third reason was the impact of the SDP-Liberal Alliance: from which larger party they drew more votes from when they contested every ward for the first time in 1982. In Grove there was no impact at all: both main parties ceded votes to them in almost equal measure. Labour lost 0.2% more votes to the Alliance in Grove than the Tories - in real money that's about three votes.

In Sherbrooke Labour dropped about ten points and the Conservatives held steady. Across the five Hammersmith wards the Tories lost two votes to the Alliance for every one Labour lost. In Fulham Labour lost three for every two the Conservatives forfeited.

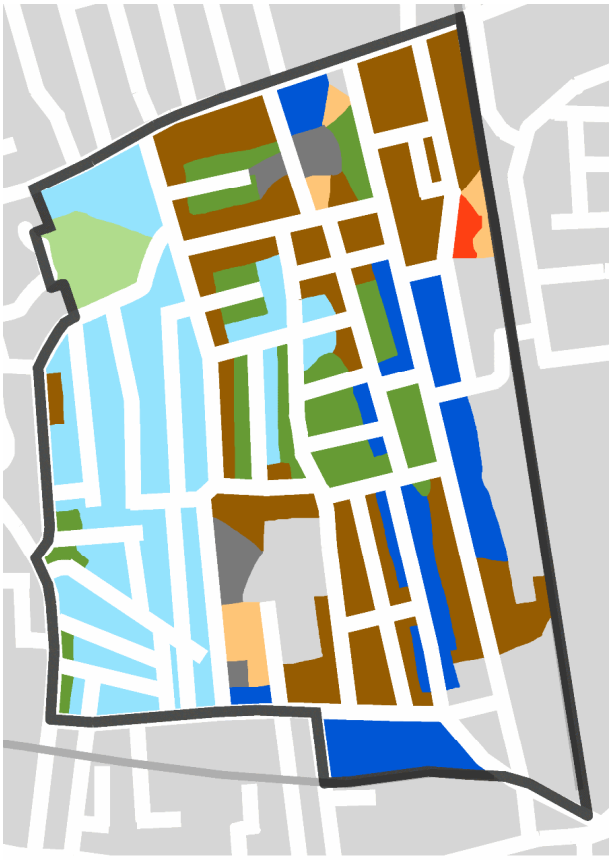
That was the difference between the two halves of the borough in the 1980s but it doesn't explain why that difference existed. The reason is that the type of affluent resident moving into Grove throughout the 1980s and 1990s was simply more liberal and left-leaning; the sorts who were employed by the BBC, based then in White City and Lime Grove, or other media and the arts. Fulham was flooding with bankers, stockbrokers, fund managers and other city professions - far more likely to be Conservative supporters. This is something of a generalisation - but not that much of one.

A look at the feature on prominent locals on the Brackenbury Village website throws up casting agents, broadcasters, artistic directors, actors, artists, artistic producers, piano teachers and authors: Grove is simply more bohemian, progressive and cosmopolitan than Fulham - in modern terms more woke.

This is now a largely very affluent part of Hammersmith: nowadays there is little to split Grove from Ravenscourt in terms of the prosperity of these neighbours. There are three main MOSAIC categories - the modern day equivalent of Charles Booth's poverty map - which describe the main demographic groups street by street.

For Grove the dominant groups are:

- Well off older global professionals
- Prosperous Settled Young Professionals
- Prosperous Mobile Single Young professionals
- Mixed Inner City Urban



Those MOSAIC demographic descriptions are typically cringe-worthy, yet these three perfectly sum up Grove in the 21st century.

In 2000 Grove ward was chopped up in the boundary review. The ward was far too small to justify three councillors and, being splat in the centre of Hammersmith, was liable to be parcelled off to make the wards surrounding it larger.

THE GAZETTE
Thursday, December 24, 1992



Cllr Jane Morris meets her namesake, ex-Mayor Tom Morris

What's in a name? Nothing, except it links generations

NEWLY-elected councillor Jane Morris found out she had more in common with former mayor Tom Morris than just her surname during her election campaign.

Cllr Morris, who was elected Labour councillor for Grove ward in Hammersmith, met up with Tom on her campaign trail who, it turns out, was Labour councillor for the same ward for 36 years.

As well as being mayor from 1971 to 1972, Mr Morris is a freeman of the borough.

She said: "It was a coincidence that we both have the same name and are linked as Labour councillors for Grove ward. Tom Morris was also the name of my grandfather so we had a few jokes about that.

"Mr Morris told me a lot about the ward in his day and its history. The one thing that Tom felt had not changed much was the borough's poverty and he believes it is now as bad as it was when he was councillor 30 years ago. He also gave me a few good tips on canvassing."

Cllr Morris joined a training day for new Labour councillors on Tuesday and is looking forward to getting stuck in to her council work in the New Year.

Is by-election result a sign of things to come?

By MIKE PARKINSON

COUNCILLORS traded claims and counter-claims this week after the Grove Ward by-election revealed a 9 per cent swing to Labour.

Jane Elizabeth Morris, 29, swept to victory with 906 votes, while Tory Paul James Jones polled 493 votes. Liberal Democrat Nicholas Martin Hopkins trailed behind with 106 votes.

Labour leader Iain Coleman seized on the result as a precursor to 'a landslide victory at the next local elections'.

But his Tory shadow Gerald Wombwell dismissed the claim and insisted his side would dominate in the years to come.

Cllr Coleman said: "This is a spectacular victory for the the Labour Party. With a lead of this size over the Tories, we will have a landslide victory at the next local elections, as we did in 1986.

"Our victory reflects the confidence local people have in the council. Despite the severity of the financial hardship imposed on us by the Government, our residents recognise the scale of the achievement this council has made in continuing to provide quality services.

"The result also shows how unpopular John Major's scandal-ridden Government has become.

"We very much regretted the loss of Cllr Vivienne Lukey, who was forced to stand down as a councillor for Grove ward in order to comply with Government legislation on 'politically restricted' posts in local authorities.

"We were very fortunate in having a candidate of the highest calibre in Jane Morris and my colleagues and I very much look forward to working with her."

Cllr Wombwell said: "The Grove ward does not prove there is a trend of any kind.

"In July there was a 10 per cent swing to us in Broadway ward. It only shows how volatile the political situation is. Labour are in cloud-cuckoo land.

"We shall consign them to darkness in May 1994."

The new councillor, who is the European Liaison Officer for the British Post-Graduate Medical Federation, said she was 'delighted'.

As a keen campaigner for Friends of the Earth, she hopes to ensure environmental issues are brought to the fore.

But the outcome here was crass. Ravenscourt ward - becoming Ravenscourt Park ward - expanded into the western end of Brackenbury Village, snaffling everything west of Cardross Street and Banim Street. The remainder - the Hammersmith Grove side - was combined with Broadway ward so that it now stretched from the edges of Fulham right up to Goldhawk Road.

This Frankenstein's Monster of a ward was fine politically for Labour because, by 2002, they had seen off the Liberal threat in Broadway and it was now a very safe ward for them. It's just that this was a completely different neighbourhood: a ward of major roads and railway lines, of big council estates and shopping centres and office blocks. No-one given a free hand to draw wards in this area would have chosen to break Grove up like this and lump the majority onto Hammersmith Broadway.

This enlarged Hammersmith Broadway ward went Labour quite easily in 2002, 52% to 27% - just about how Grove had voted four years earlier. But in 2006 catastrophe nearly struck Labour. Steve Cowan, the future council leader who won the ward's third seat, was returned with a majority of just nine votes. Self-evidently the Grove section voted Conservative; possibly by as much as 10% given how much better the Broadway end was for Labour.

A combination of deep Labour government unpopularity coupled with the sort of liberal appeal then Opposition leader David Cameron exuded switched a lot of votes. Lots more Labour supporters simply didn't vote.

It's harder to say what would have happened in 2010 because there was a bit of a swing back to Labour.

Their majority in that third seat increased to 337 (7.1%) - maybe not quite enough to have suggested the Grove section returned to voting Labour.

But Grove's Labour leanings would have reasserted themselves in 2014 and the notional result for Grove in 2018 put the Labour majority back at 28% - almost exactly where it had been in 1998.

Though Labour hung on to Hammersmith Broadway in 2006 they lost the council. The new Conservative regime tried really hard to alter the politics of Hammersmith Broadway by attempting to sell off a council estate and approving major new housing developments with almost no affordable housing within them.

One of these was the multi-storey car park in Glenthorne Road: a Berkeley housing development of over 400 apartments called Sovereign Court.

But the political impact of such developments seems to be much less than was hoped for by Conservatives. In 2026 only just over a hundred voted, a turnout six points lower than Grove ward overall.

The only thing that can be said of new private developments is that they are likely to be somewhat less inclined to Labour than council blocks probably are; not that they are going to be dormitories of masses of new Conservative voters.

In 2022 Hammersmith swung heavily to Labour and the party finished with two thirds of the vote in Grove: over fifty percentage points clear of the Tories - an insane landslide given the sort of ward it is.

Summary of election results for Grove ward

	Con	Lab	LD	Grn	Oths
1900	35.5		39.0		25.5
1903	47.3		35.3		17.4
1903B	52.3		47.7		
1906	49.5				50.5
1909		14.9			85.1
1912	37.3	19.6			43.1
1912B	49.1	17.9			33.0
1919	42.1	39.4	18.5		
1922		31.3			68.7
1923B	55.4	43.2			1.4
1925		35.6			64.4
1928		47.2			52.8
1931		26.8			73.2
1934		44.0			56.0
1934B		42.2			57.8
1936B					Unop
1937		49.5			50.5
1945	36.6	63.4			
1946B	58.4	41.6			
1949	44.1	55.9			
1953	33.3	61.8	4.9		
1956	35.2	64.8			
1959	36.6	63.4			
1962	31.9	68.1			
1964	37.3	62.7			
1968	51.4	41.6			
1971	35.5	64.5			
1974	41.6	58.4			
1978	43.1	46.7			10.2
1982	35.4	38.6	20.6		5.5
1986	31.7	50.3	18.0		
1990	39.6	49.2	11.2		
1992B	32.8	60.2	7.0		
1994	32.5	54.1	13.4		
1998	28.6	56.6	14.8		
2022	16.7	66.4	16.8		
2026	16.9	48.9	8.2	17.8	8.2

Just as Grove was susceptible to wooing by David Cameron's brand of liberal, green-tinged Conservative, it has shown itself to be allergic to Theresa May's clunky "Brexit means Brexit", "Citizens of Nowhere" rhetoric and Boris Johnson's chaotic right-wing populism.

The Conservatives made a choice when enacting Brexit to champion Leave-voting England beyond London and the price is results such as this in the places they rejected.

The same thing happened in 2026. At least the Conservatives didn't lose further support, holding steady with 17%. But in 2026 the Greens overtook the Tories for second - just, with 18%. All of that vote share (the Greens didn't contest Grove in 2022) appears to have come from Labour who fell from 66% to 49% - more in line with the sort of results we expect from this ward. But that still left Labour 32% ahead of the Conservatives, making it Labour's safest ward of those elections.

And there's the dichotomy: twenty years ago, when Labour last did very badly in London, Grove voted Conservative. In 2026 it was Labour's very best ward. It may not look like it should be, but it is.

Rollcall of Grove ward councillors

including The Grove and Ravenscourt ward (1900-1949)

2026
- Hannah Bulmer
- Steve Cowan

2022
- Steve Cowan
- Helen Rowbottom

1998
- Chris Allen
- Steve Cowan

1994
- Les Aldridge
- Adam Farrar

1992B
- Jane Morris

1990
- Les Aldridge
- Vivienne Lukey

1986
- Vivienne Lukey
- Hugh Thompson

1982
- Stephen Clarke
- Hugh Thompson

1978
- Jennifer Clarke
- Stephen Clarke

1974
- Margaret Jackson
- Philip Jacobs
- Diana Jowett

1971
- Eric Gosling
- Frank Keppel
- Thomas Morris

1968
- George Boyce
- Christopher Gibbons
- Stuart Godwin

1964
- Eric Gosling
- Diana Jowett
- Thomas Morris

1962
- Stanley Atkins
- Thomas Morris
- Sidney Mountier

1959
- Stanley Atkins
- Sidney Mountier
- David Reynolds

1956
- Stanley Atkins
- Sidney Mountier
- David Reynolds

1953
- Elizabeth Finn
- Sidney Mountier
- David Reynolds

1949
- F. Eyre
- M. Pinnell
- Henry Reynolds

1946B
- Bertie Samels

1945
- Frederick Brader
- N. Chamberlain
- M. Pinnell
- E. Prosser
- Henry Reynolds
- George Richardson

1937
- Joan Bourne
- Frederick Brader
- Joseph Clark
- L. Glenister
- Bertie Samels
- Arthur Waller

1936B
- Patrick Murray

1936B
- Harry Martin

1934B
- Joseph Clark

1934
- Arthur Bentall
- Walter Davies
- Harry May
- Harriet Russell
- Bertie Samels
- William Waters

1931
- Henry Ainsworth
- Arthur Bentall
- Walter Davies
- Harry May
- William Randall
- Harriet Russell

1928
- Henry Ainsworth
- Arthur Belsham
- James Chamberlen
- Charles Johnson
- Sidney Raynor
- Lawrence Stevens

1925
- Henry Ainsworth
- James Chamberlen
- Victor Dean
- Charles Johnson
- Sidney Raynor
- Henry Wright

1923B
- James Fletcher

1922
- Henry Ainsworth
- James Chamberlain
- Walter Cunningham
- Patrick Finn
- Charles Johnson
- William Waters

1919
- James Chamberlen
- James Fletcher
- Louis Glenister
- Wellington Harding
- William Waters
- John Westcott

1912B
- A.F. Hunt

1912
- Thomas Bacon
- James Chamberlen
- Alfred Ebbs
- Louis Glenister
- Charles Johnson
- Henry Wright

1909
- Alfred Ebbs
- James Fletcher
- Charles Johnson
- Harry Linger
- Walter Tomes
- Henry Wright

1906

Walter Davies
- Alfred Ebbs
- James Fletcher
- James Hunt
- Walter Tomes
- Henry Wright

1903B
- Henry Watkins

1903
- Walter Davies
- James Hunt
- Charles Johnson
- Acton Phillips
- Walter Tomes
- Henry Wright

1900
- Charles Beal
- Fred Edwards
- Charles Johnson
- Acton Phillips
- Edmund Rawlings
- Walter Tomes