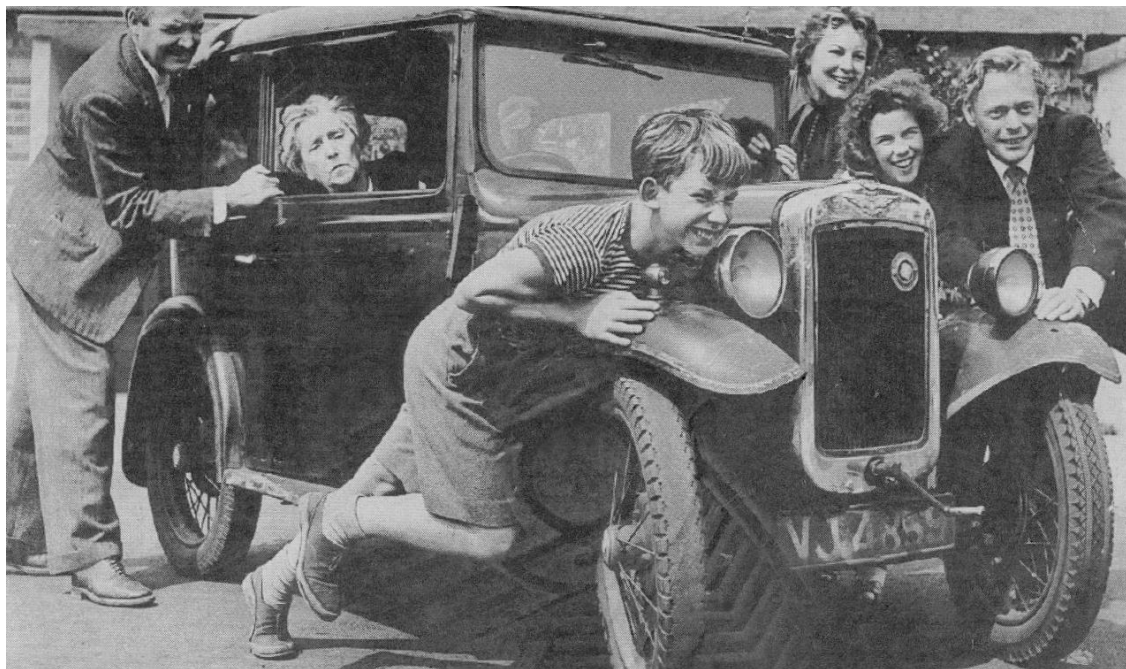


The Grove Family

UK TV soap : 1953-56 : dir. : BBC : ? x ? min
 prod: John Warrington : scr: Michael Pertwee : dir.ph.:
[Chris Beeny](#); [Margaret Downs](#)
 Nancy Roberts; Edward Evans; Ruth Dunning; Sheila Sweet; Andrew Leigh

Ref:	Pages	Sources	Stills	Words	Ω 8 ∞ M ∞	Copy on VHS	Last Viewed
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Children were put to hard labour in post-war austerity Britain

Source: Daily Mirror

Halliwell's Television Companion review:

"The Groves survived a mere three years on BBC television, or 69 hours of screen time, a passing moment compared to **"Coronation Street"**'s 1,300 plus. But they were the pioneers, the first real soap opera team in Britain. Gran Grove, played by Nancy Roberts as a testy old matriarch, became a folk heroine much in demand for opening fêtes and new department stores. When a new actress took over the part of pretty daughter Pat it attracted as much attention as a Cabinet change.

The family's social standing exactly matched the imagined standing of the television audience in the mid-fifties - lower-middle-class suburban, forever repairing the old car or painting the ceiling. **"Grove Family"** actors were the first victims of the dilemma which sooner or later faces every soap opera performer: the steady income was lovely but the longer they remained identified with one part the harder it became ever to get other parts. Those that did survive the struggle included Edward Evans, Ruth Dunning and Christopher Beeny, then a child, now the grown-up star of **"Upstairs, Downstairs"** and **"In Loving Memory"**. Written by Michael Pertwee, produced by John Warrington."

Caption to still (below) from **BBC TV Presents** – a 50th Anniversary Celebration:

“ **"The Grove Family"** soap opera ran from 1953 to 1956. In a scene from an April 1954 episode were (l to r): Nancy Roberts (Grandma); Sheila Sweet (Pat); Ruth Dunning (Mrs Grove); Edward Evans (Mr Grove), Christopher Beeny (Lennie); Andrew Leigh (Mr Cutler) and Margaret Downs (Daphne).”

Excerpt from **Daily Mirror** article "Goodbye to the Groves" (August 91):

“The show that really summed up the never-had-it-so-good fifties was **"The Grove Family"**, Britain's first TV soap. The Groves were a respectable family, but even they caused controversy in those days before the "permissive society". Actor Chris Beeny, 51, later the cheeky footman Edward in **"Upstairs Downstairs"**, played teenager Lennie Grove. He remembers the outcry after

a scene where he was given a sip of champagne during a family celebration. "Viewers were up in arms because a child was shown drinking alcohol" says Chris, "It even prompted a question in the House of Commons." ”

[no listing in "History of Television", "How Sweet It Was" or "Television's Greatest Hits"]



Inebriated youngster alert! This calls for a question in the House!

Source: BBC TV Presents

No further information currently available. From such innocent beginnings grew the modern curse of soap-saturated television, and a mass public completely in thrall to the fictitious and endlessly perpetuated lives of "**Coronation Street**", "**EastEnders**", "**Emmerdale**", "**Brookside**", "**Neighbours**", "**Home and Away**", and on and on and on. Light dramas that were first intended to mimic the trials of ordinary life have evolved into a self-conscious *pattern* for ordinary life, a fixed reference point by which viewers can assess their own "reality". And what is most invidious of all, at least one producer is on record as saying he saw it as his mandate to mould and shape public opinion through the medium of his soap. The writers of "**The Grove Family**" were innocent of such monstrous vanity, I don't doubt.

The series was revived for a special one-off "tribute" in 1991, combining new material with footage from the original series, to mark the closure of Lime Grove studios, Shepherd's Bush, where this and many other fondly-remembered series were made. Chris Beeny, 12 in 1953, was ringleader of a group of primary school boffins who developed atomic popcorn in the quaint children's film "**CHILD'S PLAY**" (54). He also had roles in "**THE LONG MEMORY**" (52), "**THE KIDNAPPERS**" (53), "**IT'S A GREAT DAY**" (55) and "**MAN OF THE MOMENT**" (55).

See also "**The Grove Family**" (91) and subject index under **SITCOMS & SOAPS**.