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First approaches to an underexplored dialect region: Trudgill's Upper Southwest

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Abstract

Although dialectology in England received two major boosts at the end of the 19th century and the middle of the 20th century (Ellis 1889 and Orton & Barry 1956-8), discussion of dialect change since that time has avoided discussion of many areas, concentrated as it was in those Universities with a tradition of dialectology (Essex, Leeds, Sheffield, Newcastle). Though many areas have since been re-examined in England; notably Bristol dialect (Blaxter & Coates 2019), Newcastle dialect (Milroy 1994, Milroy et al. 1999) Sunderland dialect (Burbano-Elizondo 2007), and Manchester dialect (Baranowski & Turton 2015, Bermúdez-Otero et al. 2015) there remain many areas which were never fully explored at the time of the Survey of English Dialects (Birmingham as an urban area for example was completely bypassed by that survey), as well as many areas which remain little known and studied. This paper brings together what is known about the dialects of the Upper Southwest and suggests pointers for directions in future research there based on the data from Worcestershire and Herefordshire that we discuss.

Keywords

Dialect, Herefordshire, Upper Southwest, Worcestershire.

1 Introduction. The history of the Upper Southwest

1.1 Geographical location of Worcestershire and Herefordshire

The neighbouring counties of Worcestershire and Herefordshire were amalgamated into the county of Hereford and Worcester in the UK Boundary Commission's changes of 1974. Prior to this in 1966 certain Worcestershire towns had moved into Staffordshire as part of the newly created Dudley County Borough (most notably Dudley and Stourbridge). The counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire remained joined until 1998, when with a number of minor changes, the boundaries of the two historical counties were restored. Dudley and Stourbridge were not returned to Worcestershire (Shaw 2015: online). Fig. 1 shows the position of the two counties within England.

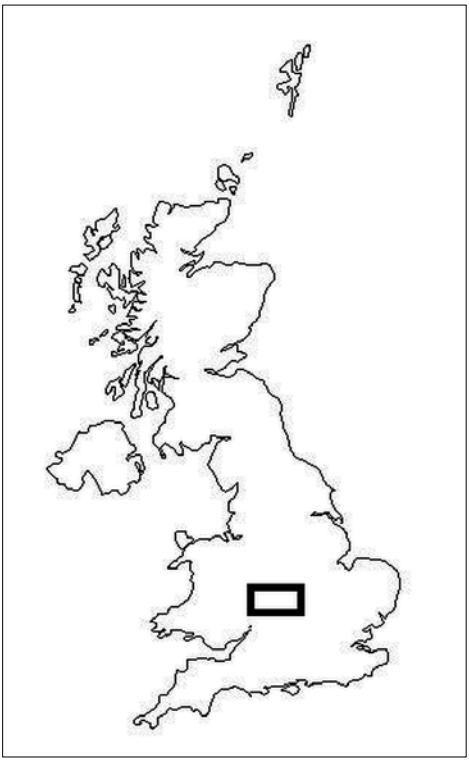

Fig. 1: Boundaries of the west Midlands area.
(Map reproduced from Local Government Boundary Commission for England, 2010).

1.2 Language and identity in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

In terms of linguistic and identity positioning, an account from the 19th century amateur dialectologist and historian Sir George Cornewall Lewis places Herefordshire in the Midland counties (as he does Worcestershire, Shropshire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire). A century later, Leeds (1972) identifies Herefordshire as South-West Midlands. The modern case for an area known as the South-West Midlands is supported by a number of non-linguistic ties (e.g. West Mercia police, West Mercia Fire and Rescue) and both counties gravitate towards Birmingham – train lines run to that area, jobs are often found there and sports organisations often play in leagues administrated there. In the main authoritative source on West Midlands English, Clark & Asprey (2013) include northern Worcestershire in the West Midlands. Indeed, the case would seem to be, then, that the area in question unequivocally belongs to the (South-West) Midlands. This could be explained by historic references to

a place in Gloucestershire as the "Lower Country", implying a degree of differentiation and distancing in folk accounts from the area. A telling quote from Tomkinson states:

> In haymaking time, some of the most adventurous of the young men, used to travel into a remote region somewhere below Gloucester, called the "Lower Country", in quest for work. They were usually successful, and not only secured for themselves a liberal supply of money and wages, but the reputation of being great travellers. (Tomkinson 1981: 66).

However, this is not necessarily the full story. Trudgill (1999) in his discussion both of the traditional and modern dialects refers to this area (and namely Worcester) as "marginal" between the Central Southwestern variety and the West Midlands (WM). While the latter expands into North Worcestershire, Western Worcestershire and Herefordshire lie predominantly in the Upper Southwestern (USW) area. This area (USW) was predicted by Trudgill to contract under the influence from Birmingham. For instance, the PRICE vowel is increasingly influenced by the dominant backed WM [ɑɪ] variant and there is increased glottalisation (as found in the Worcester Dialect Archive, described below).

The links between Birmingham as a major urban centre, with many people commuting to and fro, can be seen in the daily connections by Midland rail as well as the main artery of the M5 linking Worcester and Hereford to Birmingham (40 miles from Worcester). The de-industrialisation affecting the West Midlands meant that a number of big local employers disappeared (for instance, the Porcelain factory in Worcester) and commuting to Birmingham became more widespread. In Worcester, Bosch remains the biggest employer and the development of the University coincided with the gentrification of formerly derelict areas in the city centre (for instance, in the Diglis area). Gradually, Worcester (as other cities and villages in Worcestershire) is expanding (e.g. the recent planning development in South Worcester, the dualling of the Carrington bridge) and many incoming families commuting to Birmingham settle in. This leads to diffusion from Birmingham but traditional features, indexing a distinctive local identity, resist.

2 Linguistic Research into Herefordshire and Worcestershire

This section explores linguistic data gathered from Herefordshire and Worcestershire. The traditional varieties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire share a number of similarities with West Midlands English and have a number of differences allying them to those varieties of the South West which make them both the very interesting subject of study as well as posing a number of challenges. The main issue of course concerns the paucity of sources examining the current speech

alongside the curious positioning of them on a number of isoglosses and transition zones. Apart from the Survey of English Dialects (SED, see description in Table 1), the main historical information available comes from a number of pamphlets (from the 19th century and a couple of accounts from the early 1970s) in the form of glossaries. These pamphlets often have an additional section on customs and folk tales, which provide not only extended passages of dialect speech (in eye-spelling), but a commentary on specific usages too. In addition to this the work of the members of the English Dialect Society, led by Walter Skeat, proves a useful source.

Table 1, below, summarises the nature of the three kinds of sources we use to gather an impression of the dialects spoken in these counties. We have used amateur glossaries written by interested residents of the area, glossaries written by self-trained linguists who worked with the English Dialect Society, and scholarly dialect surveys combined with oral history sources.

Table 1. Summary of historical sources documenting linguistic Herefordshire and Worcestershire

SOURCE	AUTHORS	TYPE OF SOURCE AND POSSIBLE DISADVANTAGES OF SOURCE
eLALME	Benskin, Laing, Karaiskos & Williamson (2013)	Electronic version of the *Linguistic Atlas of Late Medieval English* – collected texts from archives around England written between c1350-c1450.
Ellis	Ellis (1889)	Dialect survey conducted across Britain and Ireland by a self-trained dialectologist. Uses self-devised early phonetic script.
SED	Orton & Barry (1969)	Dialect survey conducted across England and the Isle of Man by the University of Leeds. Focused on rural locations.
MMB	British Library (1998)	Oral history project carried out by the British Library. Not conducted to collect systematic evidence of dialect variation.
Chamberlain	Edith Chamberlain (1882)	Dialect dictionary with notes on grammar, usage and phonology by a

		member of the English Dialect Society. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Salisbury	Jessie Salisbury (1893)	Dialect glossary with notes on grammar, usage and phonology by a member of the English Dialect Society. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Cornewall-Lewis	George Cornewall Lewis (1839)	A dialect glossary of words used in Herefordshire, Gloucestershire and Monmouthshire. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
The Vigornian Monologues	Henry Kingsford (1897)	A series of papers in illustration of the dialect of Worcestershire. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation and the tone is humorous.
Havergal	Francis Havergal (1887)	A glossary of dialect words and comments on grammar by a Herefordshire vicar. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Haggard	Haggard (1972)	A glossary of dialect words and comments on grammar by a former school teacher. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Leeds	Winifred Leeds (1972)	A glossary of dialect words and comments on grammar by a former school teacher. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Tomkinson	Tomkinson (1981)	A glossary of dialect words and comments on grammar used in Kidderminster, northern Worcestershire. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.
Newbould	Newbould (2001)	A glossary of dialect words and comments on grammar used in Worcestershire. Respellings are used to describe phonological variation.

Tables A1 and A2 in the Appendices show a summary of linguistic features from the dialects of these counties, based on the data we have gathered from the sources we outlined in Table 1 above. Despite the difficulties of relying on written text, self-trained fieldworkers, aims which are not exactly parallel to our own and the use of early phonetic alphabets, we believe that these tables form the starting point of a more detailed and historical description of the linguistic features used in these parts of the Upper Southwest. From these historical amateur sources, historical professional sources, and modern professional sources, we present the phonemes of the regions' accents. We will see that there is a system to be uncovered, regional variation across the two counties and change across time. The sections below will draw upon these sources and the features described to give an overview of the regional variation found in the Upper Southwest.

2.1 An overview

Herefordshire and Worcestershire have suffered from a relative lack of interest in their linguistic varieties during the 20th century and into the present. This is probably due to the ascendancy of urban sociolinguistics, which came to examine complex multiclassal urban environments (Labov 1972, Trudgill 1974, Wolfram 1969) and to sideline rural locations in an unfortunate reversal of the phenomenon caused by the Survey of English Dialects, where urban locations were viewed as having dialects that were no longer pure. In recent years, sociolinguists have pushed back against the assertion that rural areas had no inmigration, that urban areas had extreme amounts, and that the urban and the rural should be treated differently by linguists. Kerswill (2018) explains the population movements which happened in the Industrial Revolution:

> [T]he new economy required large movements of people into the industrialising towns and cities. It appears that most of the migration was relatively local […] with continued contacts between the towns and their hinterlands, though the system of apprenticeships, as well as the practice of migrant labour, often required men, women and children to travel long distances to find work (Higginbotham nd; Worship 2000). During the nineteenth century, there was also large-scale migration from Ireland to many English towns and cities. Complex population movements such as these clearly helped determine the outcome of any dialect changes that took place. (Kerswill 2018:10)

Britain (2017: 171) uses Foucault's concept of 'gaze' to argue that dialectologists and lay people alike have conceptualised both life and language in cities versus the countryside as inherently different, and that this is extremely problematic because he himself begin[s] from an assumption that, despite society's very different conceptualisations of rural and urban, typologically language changes in the same way in both (Britain 2009, 2012). Surprisingly, this assumption seems to

surprise many people. Some dialectologists have gone as far as to argue that there are certain linguistic changes which are unique to cities (e.g. Bulot 2002; Bulot & Tsekos 1999; Calvet 1994; Messaoudi 2001).

Certainly, the most removed from the urban locations in Herefordshire and Worcestershire received the most linguistic attention at the time of the SED; the urban centres of Worcester and Hereford were not visited for the Survey. Similarly, those residents of the two counties who were interested laypeople or had some linguistic training focused on collecting localised forms of grammar and lexis, as well as some information on pronunciation. Havergal (1887) foreshadows the worries which would amplify in the next century when he explains his motivations for collecting Herefordshire dialect lexis:

> Curious words and phrases may be heard at our Infirmaries, County Courts, Savings Banks, Railway Stations, and Auctions, and at other places where rustics congregate. But in all these places a great change has been gradually coming on; old customs are dying out, and many old words and sayings are becoming obsolete. (Havergal, 1887:2).

Havergal reports that as a vicar he is well positioned to talk to all kinds of people and collect speech from the young and old, but it is clear that he fears that working-class speech forms are under threat. It is to the sources he and other lay linguists produced that we first turn in examining the dialect and its historical structure.

2.2 Academic research in Herefordshire and Worcestershire

Research in the Upper Southwest by academics has been slow to get into the public sphere. Klemola (1994a, 1994b, 1996) has worked on Gloucestershire, and there is research ongoing in the city of Bristol (Blaxter & Coates 2019, Blaxter et al 2019). With the exception of the Survey of English Dialects, no large-scale dialectology has been conducted by academic researchers until the 2010s, when work began at the University of Worcester on the Worcester Dialect Archive (WDA, Jeffries & Kailoglou 2017). The WDA is a corpus of 15 surveys and 20 sociolinguistic interviews collected as part of student projects at the University of Worcester. The post war creation of Teaching Colleges and millennial awarding of university status to many newer HE institutions has proven a lifeline for dialect research in the UK, and the Worcester Dialect Archive is a clear example of this.

The counties of Herefordshire and Worcestershire as they are described by Ellis (1889) fall across areas 11 (Worcestershire), 12 (Worcestershire), and 13 (Herefordshire.) In addition, his subarea 6 (the Black Country) takes in a small part of Northern Worcestershire before the 1974 boundary redrawing. Ellis's iso-

glosses were based on Middle English reflexes and subsequent grammatical developments. At the time of his survey, speakers in area 11 had velar nasal plus realisation, and speakers in area 12 and 13 were distinguished by the use of *-s* in all parts of the verbal paradigm in 12 but periphrastic DO in 13. (cf. Klemola 1994b).

Dialect in the areas of Herefordshire and Worcestershire then, have features which can be traced back into Middle English and further back. Fig. 2 shows the feature map for bin/byn type tokens in England and clearly shows the presence of verbal plural <n> marker for the present tense in late Middle English.

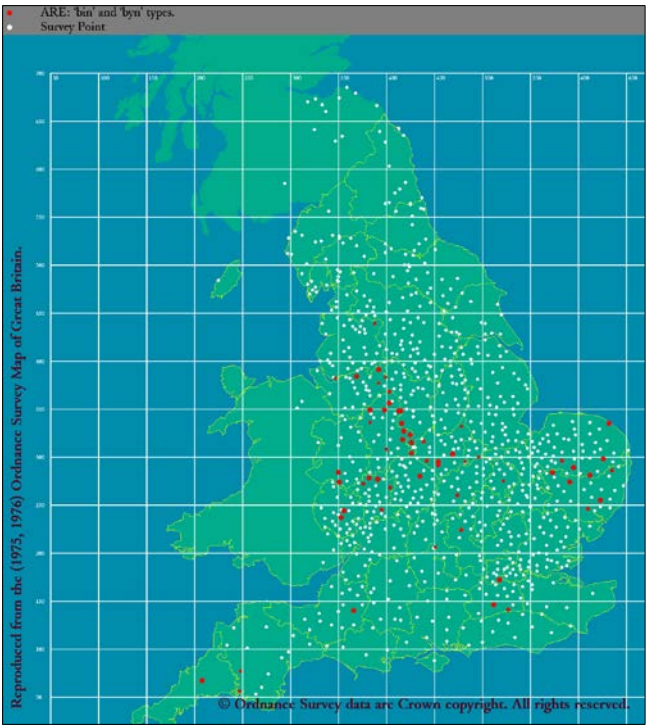

Fig. 2. *bin*/*byn* type tokens (after Benskin et al. 2013).

At the same time, we can see that more West Saxon <th> type endings can be found in Herefordshire (see Fig. 3).

In phonological terms too, we can see evidence of South West fricative voicing once being much more widespread. Fig. 4 shows a map of /v/ forms before /r/. It can be seen that this form is already present in the region at this time.

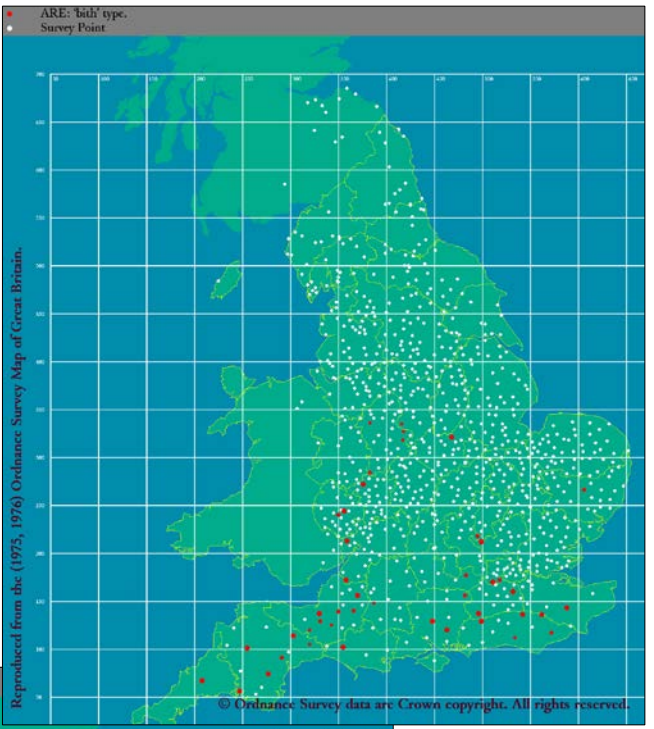

Fig. 3. *bith* type tokens (after Benskin et al. 2013).

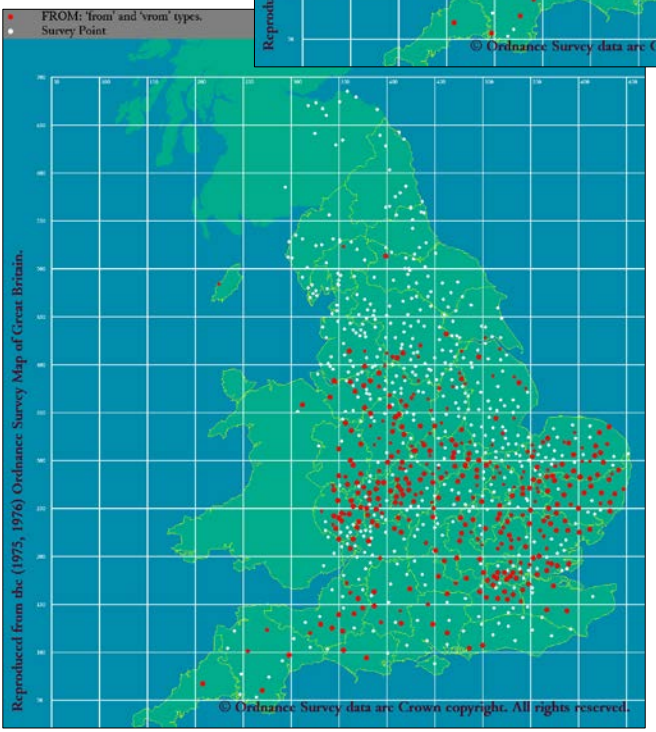

Fig 4. /v/ forms before /r/ (after Benskin et al. 2013).

Comparison with the bare onset though shows that the voiced fricative onset took longer to come into the region (see Fig. 5). The feature is only found in Gloucestershire, in Benskin et al. (2013), though of course there are more manuscripts to be added to the Linguistic Atlas of Late Middle English, and this is in any case problematic since it relies on written data and not spoken data. Nevertheless, its presence there is useful since we do find the feature later further north in Herefordshire (Orton & Barry 1969, 1970, 1971).

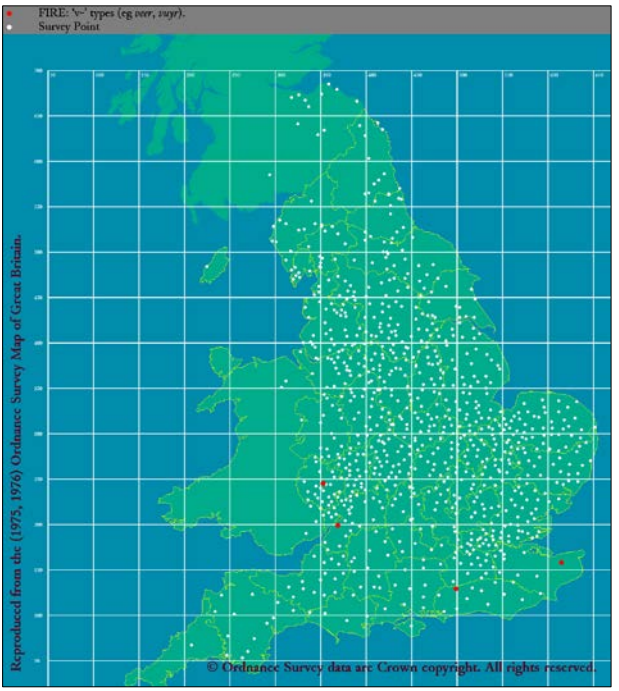

Fig. 5: /v/ in onset position (after Benskin et al. 2013).

2.3 Traditional dialect features in Worcestershire and Herefordshire today

Herefordshire and Worcestershire's traditional dialects appear to have the additive *a-* in front of verbs, a number of words of French origin (linked to early settling in the area), minimal influence from Welsh (Haggard 1972), present tense formation with the suffix *-s* (*I says*, *you says* etc.) but also with variation across Herefordshire in the formation of the modal verb (*I be*, *you be*, *he* be etc. in South Herefordshire and *I'm*, *he'm*, *we'm* in the North), past tense *I was sat* (for continuous aspect) (Leeds 1972).

Evidence from the Worcester Dialect Archive (see Table A1 in the Appendix for a full list of the features), suggests that the use of traditional USW accent features remains strong, such as the voiced intervocalic stop (e.g. [θɜɹdɪ] by older males), rhoticity and lengthened [aɹ>aː] in TRAP/BATH vowels (cf. Piercy's work in Dorset). Additionally, there is a mixed picture concerning the traditional h-dropping (esp. in terms of age). Surveys from the Archive have also found rhoticity in words like "Severn", but also letter-commA merger in words like "mother". While the former feature is characteristic of the South West, the latter is clear influence from the West Midlands. It is for these reasons that the distinctive dialect area of the USW (comprising both of Herefordshire and most of Worcestershire) is so interesting. These competing pressures and influences explain why the Worcester area was described by Jeffries & Kailoglou (2017) as "not exactly West Midlands".

The majority of the data provided in the brief overview concerns the city of Worcester. The focus of the Dialect Archive had so far been the documentation of main features heard in the city centre. Recordings are now being included from adjacent areas (namely Hereford). Once that stage is accomplished, there will be a more accurate representation of variation within this dialect area.

An interesting point concerns the perception of traditional features documented in the SED recordings. There are seven recordings from Worcestershire and seven from Herefordshire. While pronunciations of "mom" are recognised from students from the Black Country, this is less so for students from Worcester. Indeed, in the last 5 years that we have been discussing these recordings in the seminars at the University of Worcester, only one student (from Kempsey, south of Worcester) could understand and recognise the recorded speech (from Offenham). This is of particular importance as many of the students come from local areas (including Hereford) and suggests lack of familiarity with the traditional features (or better, the features of the "traditional" dialect). Therefore, while "not exactly West Midlands", Worcestershire and Herefordshire are oriented towards the major West Midland conurbation and they do share an increasing range of features, giving place to the rise of a supra-local variety shared with the adjacent counties.

3 The BATH/TRAP split in Worcestershire and Herefordshire

3.1 Background to the Split

As described, Worcestershire and Herefordshire, in the Upper Southwest, have a dialect system which lies between the Southwest and the West Midlands. Therefore, phonological features which are traditionally associated with a 'North/South' divide become a point of interest; while the West Midlands sits in the 'linguistic North' with speakers using short [a] in BATH as well as TRAP, speakers

in the South West show varying levels of a TRAP/BATH phonemic split, with lengthened/lengthened and backed [a:]/[ɑ:] in BATH (Piercy, 2010; Blaxter & Coates, 2019) but also, traditionally, lengthened short vowels in many environments, including TRAP - e.g. [ba:d] for 'bad' (Wells 1982:345). As Piercy (2010: 55) describes, "the [phonemic] status of these vowels in the southwest is very much disputed".

The phonemic split of the TRAP and BATH lexical sets has historically been a process of lengthening and backing, so that [a] became [a:] and then backed to [ɑ:] in many South Eastern dialects, in certain phonetic contexts (e.g. before voiceless fricative and nasal consonant clusters such as bath and dance). This nelengthening /lengthening and backing of /a/ has also occurred before /r/ in the START lexical set and in the PALM lexical set. While rhoticity has since been lost in many parts of the country, resulting in [a:]/[ɑ:] for the START vowel, rhotic speakers remain in the South West and surrounding areas. Piercy (2011) summarises the phonemes of /a/ in different varieties of English (see Table 2). Her investigation in Dorset in the South West of England revealed that there is a split in progress, with the backing of BATH among the younger speakers, and lengthened /a/ in all sets including TRAP.

Table 2. The distribution of the phonemes of /a/ among different varieties of English (Piercy 2011: 156)

One Phoneme Dialects	
/a/ TRAP, BATH, PALM, START	*Scottish English* *Northern Ireland English*
Two Phoneme Dialects	
/a/ TRAP, BATH /aː/ START, PALM	*Northern England English* *Welsh English*
/a/ TRAP /ɑː/ BATH, START, PALM	*RP* *Southeast England English* *South African English* *Australian English* *New Zealand English*
/æ/ TRAP, BATH /ɑ(:) (r)/ PALM, START	*General American* *Canadian English*
Three Phoneme Dialects	
/æ/ TRAP, BATH /ạ/ TRAP, BATH */ɑ(:) (r)/ PALM, START	*New York City English* *Philadelphia English*

The question for speakers from Worcestershire and Herefordshire is, where do they belong in Table 1? Do they pattern as Northern England English, like their neighbouring West Midlands under the supralocalising influence of the big city of Birmingham, with a lack of phonemic split between TRAP and BATH? Or do they show a southernising influence in the backing of BATH, along with START and PALM, akin to what Piercy finds in Dorset? It is also important to consider the lengthening of TRAP as a traditional feature of the South West. In investigating the TRAP-BATH split in Bristol, Blaxter & Coates (2019) find a complicated picture 'with evidence for a traditional length-only TRAP–BATH split, for a length and backness split diffusing from the east and for a merger diffusing from the north' (Blaxter & Coates, 2019:269). Furthermore, as the South West is known for its prevalence of rhotic speakers, there is also the possibility of rhoticity in START tokens resulting in a third phoneme for /a/, (as indicated in Piercy's table for rhotic North American speakers).

As already mentioned, the main descriptions of dialectal variation in Worcestershire and Herefordshire come from the Survey of English Dialects (SED) which visited seven locations in each county. At that time a mixture of variants for /a/ in each lexical set can be observed (see below). TRAP has a front position which varies slightly both in height and length (for some speakers there is length). Some speakers have a short vowel in BATH, others a long front vowel while for others there is backing also. Speakers are variably rhotic or completely rhotic in the samples collected and START as a set only has front vowels, but those speakers with rhoticity loss have compensatory lengthening. PALM patterns similarly to with TRAP, though in some lexical items it is reduced to schwa and for some speakers as with BATH, lengthening is underway.

TRAP [a~a:~æ]
BATH [a~æ~a:~ɑ~ɑ:]
START [a: ~ aɻ]
PALM [a:~ a~ɑ:~ə:]

3.2 Data collection

Evidence from the Worcester Dialect Archive (a corpus of 15 surveys and 20 interviews), suggests that the use of traditional USW accent features remains strong in Worcestershire, such as the rhoticity and lengthened [aˑ>a:] in short vowels including TRAP. As an expansion of the WDA, speakers from Worcestershire and Herefordshire were recorded reading a passage and a word list, designed to elicit variables of interest including the vowels in the BATH, TRAP, PALM and START lexical sets. The analysis here concerns the speech of the eleven participants recorded so far. All eleven speakers were white and from working-class backgrounds, coming from Worcester and Malvern (Worcestershire) and Hereford and Ledbury (Herefordshire) (see Table 3 and Fig. 6). The participants

were recruited directly by the researchers, with snowball sampling enabling further recruitment. The recordings took place at various locations (University premises, BUPA Malvern, Ledbury) and speakers were recorded at 44,000mHz in Table 3.

Table 3 Worcestershire and Herefordshire speaker details.

SPEAKER ID	GENDER	AGE	SOCIAL CLASS	LOCATION
F21	Female	21	Working class	Ledbury, Herefordshire
F50	Female	50	Working class	Ledbury, Herefordshire
M30	Male	30	Working class	Ledbury, Herefordshire
M50	Male	50	Working class	Ledbury, Herefordshire
F18	Female	18	Working class	Hereford, Herefordshire
F21	Female	21	Working class	Hereford, Herefordshire
F21	Female	21	Working class	Malvern, Worcestershire
F32	Female	32	Working class	Malvern, Worcestershire
F60	Female	60	Working class	Malvern, Worcestershire
F41	Female	41	Working class	Worcester, Worcestershire
M50	Male	50	Working class	Worcester, Worcestershire

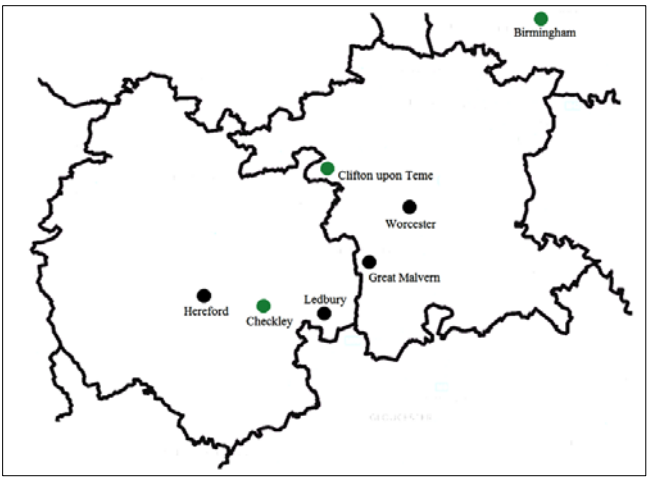

Fig. 6. Map of Worcestershire and Herefordshire showing locations of speakers for the current dataset (black circles) and locations of sites recorded in the SED (green circles), as well as Birmingham as a point of reference in the West Midlands.

The spoken data from the reading passages and word lists were used for the data presented here. Speech was coded using ELAN and normalised and auto aligned using FAVE (Rosenfelder et al. 2014). There were no issues over lateral final tokens being miscoded as reported in Leach (2018) since the reading passage and list did not contain such tokens. In total there were 453 tokens and, of these, 150 were BATH tokens.

3.3 Spoken data from Herefordshire speakers

1992. For the four speakers from Ledbury (see vowel plots in Fig. 7), we can see that BATH backing is in progress, with a distinct separation from the fronter TRAP vowel and the beginnings of a merger with the backed PALM and START vowels. The BATH vowel is long for all speakers, indicating that it is making its way through the [a] >[a:] >[ɑ:] trajectory. The older speakers (F50 and M50) have variable rhoticity.

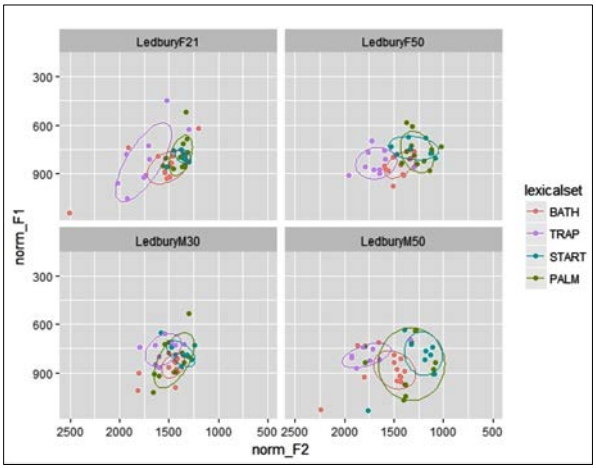

Fig. 7. Vowel plots for Ledbury speakers.

The two young female speakers from Hereford show slightly different patterns of backing (see Fig. 8). F18 has backed BATH tokens but all of the vowels are quite close together. This particular speaker originally depicted herself as middle-class, but then 'admitted' the working-class occupations of parents, perhaps indicating the prestigious influence of the southern variant in her own speech. F21 shows BATH backing in relation to TRAP but not as backed as PALM and START. This is similar to what we see in the speakers from Worcestershire.

Fig. 8. Vowel plots for Hereford speakers.

3.4 Spoken data from Worcestershire speakers

The backing of BATH tokens is much more variable amongst the speakers from Worcestershire (see Fig. 9). While the older speakers (Malvern F60 and Worcester M50) have relatively backed BATH tokens, Worcester F41 has no backed BATH tokens (apart from in the word can't). However, a lengthened BATH vowel is evident for Worcester F41, indicating that the first part of the split may be in progress. Malvern F21 and F32 show something in between, with some backed BATH tokens, but others overlapping with TRAP.

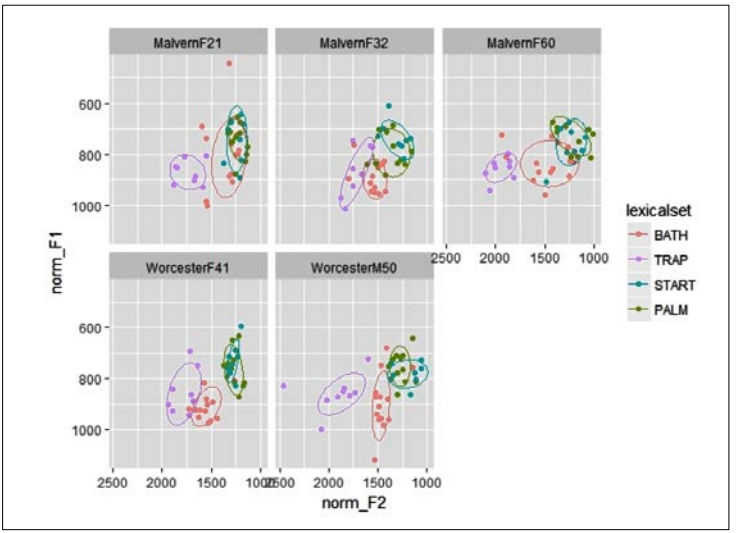

Fig. 9. Vowel plots for Malvern and Worcester speakers

3.5 Conclusions from the dataset

Tentative conclusions from the data of these eleven speakers suggests we are finding a continuum of variation and a change across time, with the backing of BATH and therefore the TRAP/BATH split occurring for some speakers in the Upper Southwest.

The working-class Herefordshire speakers we recorded show the strongest signs of backing and lengthening, the Ledbury speakers more so than the Hereford speakers. More data is needed to investigate this further. The working-class speakers from Malvern and Worcester, in Worcestershire, appear to show variable influence from Southern backing of BATH. While some have back BATH tokens, others do not. Again, more speakers are needed to verify this finding.

For these speakers there is the added consideration of rhotic tokens, particularly for the Herefordshire speakers, some of whom have rhoticity in START tokens in the word list. This could be interpreted as a third phoneme (cf. Piercy's classification of rhotic North American varieties at the bottom of Table 1). More generally, the Herefordshire speakers have more rhotic tokens in the NURSE and lettER sets and therefore it is important to consider the variation in rhoticity in combination with different vowels. As Blaxter et al. (2019) find in their study of speakers in Bristol, while some constraints on rhoticity are seen at a community level, others are variable by speaker and, as the title of their article suggests, 'each person does it their way'. Furthermore, rhoticity is strongly linked to social class and age and therefore more speakers, including middle-class speakers, are needed to explore the extents and effects of rhoticity more broadly.

Overall, it appears that speakers in the northernmost South Western counties sit close to an isogloss, experiencing both northernising pressures to keep a front BATH realisation and southernising pressures to split BATH from TRAP.

4 Summary and future goals

The dialects of Herefordshire and Worcestershire then have evolved like any others, and continue to do so. We have provided evidence here for the distinctive morphological and phonological features of the varieties and pointed to directions of change, notably a standardisation of the morphological system, loss of rhoticity, and the development of the TRAP/BATH split. One particular further direction for our dataset, as our corpus of speakers continues to grow, is to look at the evolution of a FOOT/STRUT split and its spread northwards in this region. While there is evidence of the split further north in areas such as Manchester (cf. Strycharczuk et al. 2019; Turton & Baranowski, 2020), Braber & Jansen (2019) find variable patterns of the split in the East Midlands and Asprey and Lawson (2019) report a 'fudged' variant in Birmingham. While the SED reports a variable

merger of FOOT and STRUT in Worcestershire and Herefordshire, it will be interesting to see if, like the TRAP/BATH split we see a split in progress, particularly amongst younger speakers in the area.

As we continue to collect data from these areas in the Upper Southwest, we encourage others to work on these under researched varieties. Rural varieties are generally understudied now, and the regional positioning of the speakers, close to Wales, and straddling two modern phonological shibboleths, makes this research extremely important for insights into deeper social mechanisms of sound change and their relationship to general rules of sound change.

Appendices

Table A1. Linguistic features: Worcestershire.

Vowels

Feature	Description	Sources
KIT	[ɪ]	SED
DRESS	[ɛ] [ɪ] 'yes' [jɪs] 'beg' [bag]	SED Tomkinson SED Tomkinson
TRAP	[a~aː~æ~æː] 'man' [mɒn] 'slab' [slɒb] 'stand' [stɒnd] 'catch' [kɛtʃ]	WDA SED Tomkinson Tomkinson Newbould Tomkinson
LOT	[ɒ~ɑ~æ] [ɒ~ɑ]	SED; Tomkinson MMB
STRUT	[ʊ~ə~ʌ] 'one' [wæn] / [wʊn] / [wɔn] / [wʌn] 'one' [wɒn] [wʌn] [wən]	SED; MMB; WDA SED MMB
FOOT	[ʊ] (FOOT and STRUT merged)	Ellis; SED
BATH	[ɑː~aː~a]	Ellis; SED; MMB; WDA
NURSE	[əː] 'first' [fʊst] 'were' [wɛə]	SED; MMB SED

FLEECE	'week' [wɪk] 'seed' [sɪd] 'sheep' [ʃɪp~ʃɪəp] [ɪ] [eɪ] 'chape' (cheap), 'chate' (cheat)	SED Tomkinson Newbould Tomkinson; Newbould
FACE	[aɪ~eɪ] [ɛi~æi~ai] 'day' [di]	SED MMB SED; MMB
PALM / START	[ɑː~əː] [ɑː] 'half' [aːf] 'far' [fʌː] [fəː] 'half' [haːf]	SED MMB SED MMB
THOUGHT	[ɑː] 'floor' [fləː] [ɒː]	SED; Tomkinson Tomkinson MMB
GOAT	[ɑʊ~aʊ] [ɔʊ~ʌʊ~aʊ] 'go' [guː] / [gʊ] 'go' [guː]	SED MMB SED MMB
GOOSE	'you' [jəʊ] 'through' [aʊ]	SED Tomkinson
PRICE	[ɒɪ~ɒi~ɔɪ~ʌɪ] [ɑi~ɒi~ɒɪ~ʌɪ~aɪ]	SED MMB
CHOICE	[aɪ]	Tomkinson
MOUTH	[æʊ~ɛʊ~əʊ~əu] [æʊ]	SED MMB
NEAR	'year(s)' [jəː(z)] 'years' [jɪːz] 'here' [jəː] [ɪə]	SED; MMB SED MMB
SQUARE	'square' [skwəː] 'there' [ðɛː] 'chair' [tʃɪə] [ɛː]	SED MMB
NORTH / FORCE	[ɑː~ɔː] [ɔː]	SED MMB
happY	[i]	Trudgill
horsES	'wagon' 'gardens' [ɪn] 'curtain' [kəːtɪn]	SED MMB

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