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Language and Mobility of Late Modern English Paupers

This article explores the relationship between the language of paupers and patterns of mobility in Late Modern England. Based on samples from a pauper letter corpus (c. 1795-1834), the study investigates (a) reasons for paupers to migrate, and (b) to what extent speech and dialect reflections in pauper letters allow us to determine whether the writers' home parishes can also shed light on their dialect origins. To illustrate these different aspects, data from Dorset and Cumberland are presented and viewed in the context of different types of historical data as well as contemporary sources. The two case studies lead to the conclusion that we cannot assume that the parish of legal settlement is also the place where the writer's dialect was acquired. Nevertheless, if non-standard and dialect features are contained in the pauper letters, they can provide clues about the wider dialect area from which the writers of the letters originate.

Keywords: pauper letters; mobility; dialects; Dorset; Cumberland

1 Introduction

During the first Industrial Revolution, many members of the lower social orders in England moved around the country in order to find employment, particularly in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We can investigate migration patterns of the labouring poor through pauper letters which were written under the Old Poor Law in England during the period c. 1795-1834. Anyone "in distress" had the right to apply for "out-relief" if they had migrated and lived outside the parish in which they had formal settlement, or "home parish," for short. If the officials accepted the applicants' claims, relief was typically offered in the form of money, or the paupers were removed from their current domicile to their home parish, effectively initiating return migration (see Whyte 280; Auer & Fairman 78; Laitinen & Auer 189). Migration can be defined as "a change of normal residence within Britain," "irrespective of the distance moved or the

duration of stay at an address," while the term "emigration" is reserved for "a residential move from Britain to another country" (Pooley & Turnbull 8).

Despite the fact that the labouring poor received but limited schooling (Auer, Gardner & Iten forthcoming; Gardner forthcoming; Gardner submitted), owing to compulsory elementary education only having been introduced in England with the Second Education Act in 1880 (Stephens 78, Crone 163), they had to write letters to their parish of legal settlement in order to apply for out-relief. Based on a corpus of more than 2,000 pauper letters from 39 counties, we investigate this unique data source as part of the SNSF-funded research project "The Language of the Labouring Poor in Late Modern England." The aim of the project is to gain a better understanding of the role of social stratification in real-time linguistic change, that is, we explore in what way language use and linguistic change differ across the different social layers. Based on the new lower-class data, we also aim to complement the 'traditional' history of written English which is largely based on the language use of the better educated layers of society (cf. Romaine).

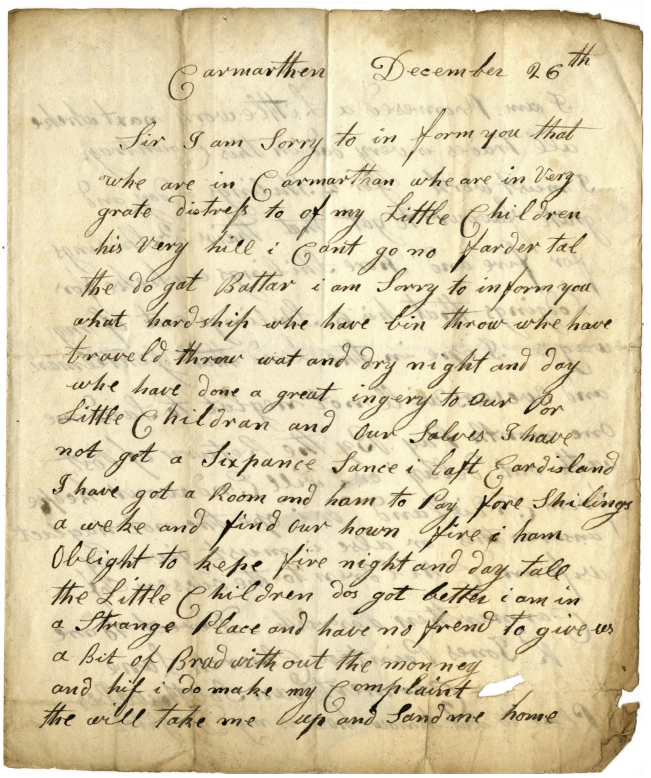
In this article we focus on the relationship between language and mobility of Late Modern English paupers and the possibilities that the data provide for linguistic studies. Section 2 briefly describes the make-up of the corpus of the labouring poor and related procedures. In Section 3, we examine reasons why the poor typically migrated away from their home parish, drawing both on statistical data for the period based on 16,091 life histories by family historians (Pooley & Turnbull) as well as comments made by the paupers in applications for out-relief collected for our project. In Section 4, we explore the mobility patterns of paupers applying for out-relief to parishes in Dorset. Two linguistic case studies are then presented in Section 5, exploring to what extent dialect reflections emerging from letters can help us determine whether the writers' home parishes are likely also their linguistic anchoring point. It does not necessarily follow that someone's home parish is identical to their place of birth since settlement could also be gained later in life elsewhere through other mechanisms. In our first case study (Section 5.1) we investigate a set of letters from Charls Ann Green to her Dorset home parish, Wimborne, identifying dialect features through variant spellings and consulting modern dialect surveys. The second case study (Section 5.2) aims to identify dialect features in a set of letters by Moses Tyson, as well as some other individual pauper letters, from Cumberland. This is done by considering contemporary meta-linguistic comments about the Cumberland dialect.

Challenges related to the study of dialect reflections and mobility will also be considered. Finally, we conclude in Section 6 with a summary and future research directions.

2 The Corpus of the Labouring Poor: Data and Procedures

The pauper letter samples that serve as the basis for this paper are part of the previously mentioned corpus of c. 2,000 pauper letters. Philologically accurate transcriptions have been made of copies or facsimiles of the letters held in archives all over England. To ensure a high level of consistency, the transcriptions have been checked by at least three project members. In addition to the diplomatic transcriptions, the project team has also prepared a plain-text version, a normalised transcription, an XML version, and detailed metadata extracted from the material such as date, domicile, parish of legal settlement, social information about the applicant, reason/topic for poor relief application, and related letters.

As part of the transcription process, we also try to elucidate who actually wrote or encoded the letters. Since literacy levels were not high at the time (see Section 1), some paupers may have had help when preparing the letters. Yet for linguistic analyses it is crucial to know whether a letter is autographical, that is, written by the poor relief applicant who also signed with their name, or non-autographical, that is, encoded by a helping hand. For the latter, it is useful to distinguish, roughly, between persons from the applicant's social circle with sufficient education to be able to pen a letter, and more professional hands, such as clerks or parish officials, where typically the handwriting is very neat, sometimes with flourishes, and letter-writing conventions (e.g. layout) are observed. However, Thomas Sokoll notes that "professional writers … were apparently only very rarely resorted to" (65). He further states that "[i]n many cases […] it can […] be presumed that people either wrote their letters themselves or had them written by someone who was close to them." In either case the letter can be regarded as authentic.


Carmarthen December 26th

Sir I am Sorry to inform you that
whe are in Carmarthan whe are in Very
grate distres to of my Little Children
his Very hill i Cant go no farder tal
the do get Bettar i am Sorry to inform you
what hardship whe have bin throw whe have
travele throw wat and dry night and day
whe have done a great ingery to our Sor
Little Children and our Salves I have
not get a Sixpance Sance i left Cardisland
I have got a Room and ham to Pay fore Shilings
a weke and find our hown fire i ham
Oblight to kepe fire night and day tall
the Little Children dos got bettar i am in
a Strange Place and have no frend to give us
a Bit of Brad with out the monney
and hif i do make my Complaisst
the will take me Ups and Send me home

Figure 1. First page of letter by Richard Jones, 26 December c. 1813, HE/EA/1[1]

Figure 1 illustrates a letter by a pauper which we assume to be authentic on the basis of the general findings by Sokoll and Steven King, also taking into account the handwriting, layout and spelling displayed in the letter. The same holds for the seven letters by Moses Tyson written between 1828 and 1830, which are examined in the second case study in Section 5.2. Sometimes several letters survive by one pauper which were written by the same hand over a stretch of more than three years. It is very likely that the applicant is also the writer since it would be unlikely that the same person would have helped the applicant over such a long period (King 37; Sokoll 64). This is the case with the eight letters by Charls Ann Green written between 1820 and 1826, which form the basis of the linguistic case study in Section 5.1. The question of authorship is not para-

[1] This image is reproduced with the kind permission of the Herefordshire Archive Service.

mount for the letters discussed in Sections 3 and 4 and will not be discussed in detail since they are not analysed linguistically, but mined for factual content relating to migration patterns. The sample also contains letters written by officials, discussing the fate of paupers (e.g. Martha Gilmore in Andover who is legally settled in Sturminster Marshall). The dataset underlying the analysis of migration patterns in Section 4 is presented in the Appendix and includes name of pauper, year of writing, number of letters, parish of legal settlement, domicile and migration distance.

3 The Migrating Poor

In order to gain a deeper understanding of migration patterns of the British population after 1750, Colin Pooley and Jean Turnbull evaluated 16,091 life histories from a broad spectrum of society, such as agricultural labourers, domestic servants, (semi-)skilled manual and non-manual workers, as well as higher-ranked professional workers. They found that the two most common reasons for migrating in the period from 1750 to 1839 are, firstly, work, which accounts for 47.8% of all moves, and secondly, marriage, which explains 26.5% of all moves. Infrequent other reasons include housing, a crisis, war service or retirement (Pooley & Turnbull 72). Unemployment as a cause for migration was particularly prevalent from the 1810s onwards (Levitt 160). According to Carol Beardmore, "in the post-Napoleonic War period rural poverty was an ever-present threat" (144), with a significant mismatch between level of wages and cost of living, meaning that workers in rural areas often struggled to earn enough to keep themselves above subsistence levels.

A breakdown of the data reveals that men were significantly more likely to move for work than women (see Table 1), whereas marriage entailed migration more often for women than for men. By age group, work is the strongest factor for migration in those under 20 and between 40 and 59, while among the different age groups marriage plays the most important role for those aged 20 to 39. Among lower-ranked occupational groups, those in domestic service moved for work by far the most (83.7%), whereas the rate is at average levels for agricultural and unskilled manual workers as well as farmers (between 50% and 56.8%). Work-related moves were most often undertaken not by individuals (50.2%), but by the nuclear family unit (67.2%) (Pooley & Turnbull 73). The migration radius of farmers and unskilled agricultural workers was

below 20 km on average (19.4 km and 16.7 km, respectively), compared with unskilled manual workers (20.3 km), unpaid households (27.8 km) and those in domestic service (41.9 km) (Pooley & Turnbull 68). Agricultural labourers often relied on their local reputation for employment as a farm-hand (Pooley & Turnbull 153), and like unskilled manual workers they were "constrained by low wages and the operation of local and regional labour markets" (70).

	Sex		**Age group**		
	Men	Women	< 20	20–39	40–59
Work	51.5%	36.6%	54.9%	44.4%	54.3%
Marriage	20.7%	44.5%	12.3%	36.2%	7.7%

Table 1. Percentage of paupers migrating for work and marriage by sex and age group (based on Pooley & Turnbull 73)

The writers of poor relief letters in our corpus were often agricultural labourers or manual workers, people with an often unspecified "trade" (see (1) below), who were underemployed or in search of employment, but also the infirm and/or elderly who were no longer fit to work. Letters from able-bodied poor usually contain an explanation of why relief was needed and how they had exhausted all possible alternatives, sometimes offering accounts of how they had migrated in hopes of finding work elsewhere. Others explain in their applications why they would prefer to receive pecuniary aid rather than being removed to their home parish, the reason often being the prospect of paid work at their current domicile.[2] The case of Thomas Merrey, writing from Birmingham to Ludgershall (Buckinghamshire) on 11 November 1810 to obtain out-relief, illustrates many of these points. In (1) he states that, in this time of high unemployment, he spent 13 weeks moving about the country trying to find work, trying to be as little burdensome to his parish as possible, and travelling c. 1,930 km ("12 hunderd Miles") in the process. Whether his estimate was correct or not, Merrey's example at the very least testifies to the migratory burden placed upon the unemployed at the time. His only prospect of work is "the promes oF a Winters Shop" in Birmingham, so he asks the parish overseers for money to tie him over.

[2] On the rhetoric of pauper letters see also King (187–188).

(1) Genteelmen i haue Been traueling 13 Weeks out oF Work and i haue got the promes oF a Winters Shop and iF i L[^o OVERWRITES u^]se it i shall uerreylikely Not Got Work all Winter as our trade is uerry Dead som hundards oF Men is out oF Work at this time and i Can Not Work at aney thing Else i traueled 12 hunderd Miles in that 13 Weeks Gentelmen i Do this to put you to as Little Carges as i can (BU/LU/1)

Families were sometimes separated when the male breadwinner had to leave his home, taking the initiative to find work by going tramping. Mary Wheeler describes this, and her resulting destitution, on 7 November (no year) in (2):

(2) my Husband Wheeler has left me here with[out] Subsistance or any means to procure a living for myself and Child and is gone on Tramp seeking work (BU/WO/14)

When families did migrate together on limited funds, this could equally cause considerable hardship. On 26 December c. 1813, Richard Jones outlines to the overseers of Eardisland (Herefordshire) the toll his work migration has taken on the health of his family, particularly his children (see also Figure 1):

(3) Sir I am Sorry to in form you that whe are in Carmarthan whe are in Very grate distreſs to of my Little Children his Very hill i Cant go no farder tal the do gat Battar i am Sorry to in form you what hardship whe have bin throw whe have traveld throw wat and dry night and day whe have done a great ingery to our Por Little Childran and our Salves I have not got a Sixpance Sance i laft Eardisland (HE/EA/1)

Jones had migrated the great distance of c. 125 km to Carmarthen in South West Wales. Finding himself unable to travel any further, he states that he and his family have taken up residence in Wales ("I have got a Room") and asks for financial support from his home parish.

Not everyone was physically able to move around the country tramping. At an earlier stage, William Martin had migrated from Beverley (Yorkshire) to Leeds, at c. 82 km distance, but was no longer mobile; he writes on 2 December 1832 of his complaints in (4):

(4) And i ham so lame that i ham Not able to tramp to sek Work (YO(E)/BE/38)

As this suggests, the migrating poor primarily travelled on foot; perhaps they were sometimes also able to get a (mostly) free ride on a cart. Yet, as

the pauper correspondence in our corpus highlights, travelling with vehicles of any sort was forbiddingly expensive for them.

Even when migration was an option, this also posed a risk since success in finding employment elsewhere was not guaranteed. As John Jump notes on 15 October 1831 in (5), the whole family was uprooted, but to no avail:

(5) I then had hopes of Getting work at Oldham where we Moved to but when we had Changed our abode I was disappointed in getting work (ST/UX/8)

Jump writes to the overseers of Uttoxeter (Staffordshire) from Oldham, which lies to the northeast of Manchester, at a distance of c. 86 km to his home parish.

The mobile poor represented in these examples taken from our corpus, migrating to and from various counties within Britain, travelled much larger distances than what we would expect given the findings by Pooley and Turnbull outlined at the beginning of this section. It is possible that individuals applying for poor relief are underrepresented in their data, although poor law records were consulted (25). As the authors themselves observe, "it is often the poorest members of society who are most invisible in the written records" (13). The destitute mostly only "appear when they seek relief from the authorities" (13) and are often not represented in important sources used to reconstruct life histories, such as rate books, directories and electoral registers (23). Also, personal letters and diaries of the labouring poor do not survive in great numbers, not least on account of limited funds and education.

The pauper letters collected for our project thus fill a significant gap in migration history, providing important insights into an underrepresented section of society. In the following section we explore the migration patterns of paupers who had moved away from their home parishes in Dorset, to see whether the reasons and distances travelled match those presented in the examples given in this section. We also consider the socioeconomic conditions in Dorset during the Old Poor Law which may have triggered migration and investigate whether typical migration trajectories can be discovered. In a second step, we analyse the language of a subset of pauper letters in Section 5 in order to determine whether they offer any evidence for regional features which point towards possible migration origins.

4 Language and Migration of Paupers with Legal Settlement in Dorset

This section focuses on paupers applying for out-relief from their parish of legal settlement in Dorset, examining the migration patterns of these paupers, including distances travelled and typical trajectories in their movements. The analysis is based on 50 letters written between 1800 and 1835 by, or on behalf of, 27 paupers and their families (see Section 2 regarding authenticity of authorship). All of them have a legal settlement in one of six Dorset parishes (marked with a "P" in Figure 2), listed from west to east: Beaminster (3 paupers / 9 letters), Glanvilles Wootton (1 pauper / 1 letter), Buckland Newton (3 paupers / 4 letters), Blandford Forum (9 paupers / 17 letters), Sturminster Marshall (6 paupers / 8 letters), and Wimborne (7 paupers / 14 letters).

Figure 2. Six Dorset parishes receiving applications for out-relief[3]

The following maps pinpoint each parish where the paupers moved to and wrote from, highlighting the most prominent migration patterns. A table detailing name of pauper, year of writing, number of letters, parish of legal origin, domicile and migration distance can be found in the Appendix.

[3] All maps (Figures 2–8) were created with Google Maps (Map data ©2021 Google).

Letters written to the parish of Wimborne display a very typical migration pattern (Figure 3). The paupers mainly moved eastwards, but also westwards, along the coastline, or up to London. Their destinations, from west to east, were Bridport, Cheselbourne, Bournemouth, Lymington, Portsmouth, Chichester, and London. Coastal towns with or near harbours could provide profitable trade as well as employment in the maritime sector, and were often home to small industry. London has, of course, been a magnet for those seeking work for centuries, and it also provided a wide spectrum of opportunities during the period of the Old Poor Law. The areas just outside London offered the second highest agricultural wages in the country. Towns in general were an attractive destination for migration for agricultural labourers with the promise of higher wages than in rural areas: the presence of (small) industry with even higher wages reduced the number of local workers in the agricultural sector (Redford 68–69).

Figure 3. Migration destinations of paupers legally settled in Wimborne

The pull along the coast and towards London also becomes evident from paupers with legal settlement in the parish of Sturminster Marshall (Figure 4). They migrated to Bank, Lyndhurst, Andover, Southampton, and Egham Hill (from west to east), respectively.

There is very little migration inland towards the north and none to northern England, confirming general migration trends observed at the time (Redford 48). The parish of Buckland Newton offers two examples (Figure 5) of paupers moving to Longburton (Dorset) and Frome (Somerset), a smaller clothing centre (Redford 45).

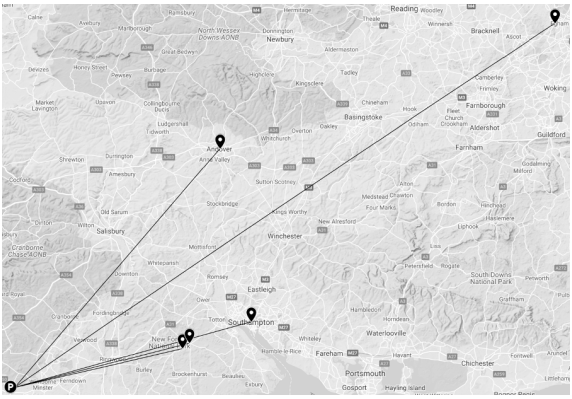


Figure 4.
Migration destinations of paupers legally settled in Sturminster Marshall

Figure 5.
Migration destinations of paupers legally settled in Buckland Newton

One additional example of inland northwards migration, to Gillingham, is provided by the parish of Blandford Forum (Figure 6). Most of our data, a third of all letters, comes from this parish, and the migration patterns neatly mirror those seen before: the pull to move towards London and along the coast, even as far west as Plymouth. From west to east, the migration destinations are Plymouth, Netherbury, Beaminster, Gillingham, Poole, Lyndhurst, Brentford, and London.

Figure 6. Migration destinations of paupers legally settled in Blandford Forum

Among the Dorset parishes, Beaminster (Figure 7) lies the furthest to the west. The three paupers writing back to this parish also stayed on the coast, moving to Weymouth and Poole (listed west to east), but also to the very distant Penzance, and nearby lead industry, in the far west.

Figure 7. Migration destinations of paupers legally settled in Beaminster

Lastly, Glanvilles Wootton (Figure 8) is referenced by only one pauper, an outlier, who moved the furthest away – to Norwich in Norfolk, a trading hub with a significant worsted and textile industry (Redford 42–43). Unfortunately, there is no indication in the letter as to what may have caused this extreme case of long-distance migration.

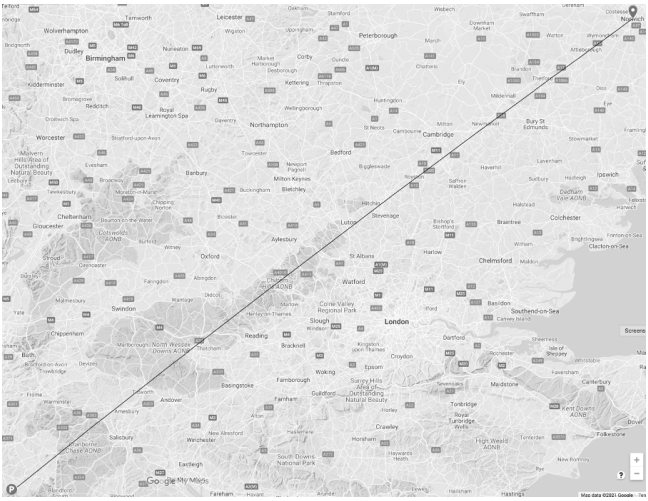


Figure 8. Migration destination of pauper legally settled in Glanvilles Wootton

The directions in which paupers legally settled in Dorset moved neatly mirror general migration patterns within England at the time. Pooley and Turnbull (354) also document migration along the coastline, the significant influence exerted by London, and even moves towards the more distant or remote Penzance and Norwich. There is, however, something unusual about the distances travelled by the Dorset paupers. On average they move much further away than the general population or low-income households between 1750 and 1839. In Figure 9, each line represents one pauper from our dataset and the distance between them and their parish of legal settlement (detailed information on the paupers is provided in the Appendix).[4] On average they migrated about 87 km, whereas the average distance moved by the general population barely reached 38 km (Pooley & Turnbull 65). The average is even lower, below 28 km, for low-income groups such as agricultural labourers, unskilled manual workers and unpaid households (see Section 3). These are the occupational groups that the paupers represented in our corpus resemble the most. What is so unusual is that about half the general population only moved along a distance of under 10 km (Pooley & Turnbull 65), whereas this is only the

[4] The distance was calculated on the basis of the most direct route on existing roads rather than taking a direct line between origin and destination. We do not know the exact routes the migrating poor took and, if they stopped at other destinations first before settling on the one recorded in the letters, they may have travelled even further than indicated.

case for about 7% of the Dorset paupers. In contrast, c. 60% of them undertake long-distance migration, that is, over 50 km, which was only observed for 19% of the general population at the time (Pooley & Turnbull 65).

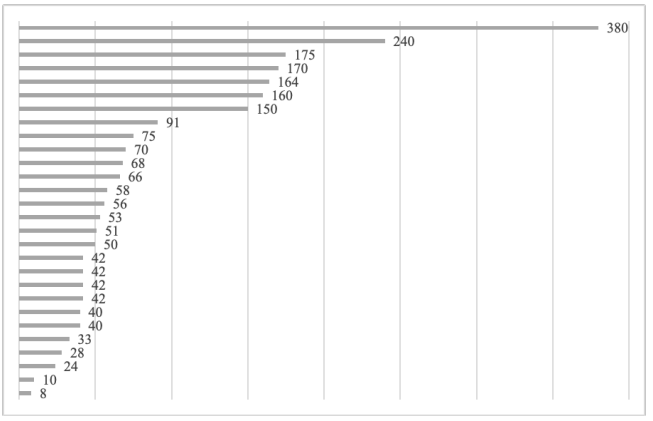


Figure 9. Distance migrated from parish of legal settlement (km)

In their letters the paupers unfortunately reveal very little about their motivation for moving or their occupation. However, one pauper legally settled in Dorset did move to find work as reported by Dinah Munday on 13 February c. 1825 in (6), writing from Chichester to Wimborne:

(6) my Husband is out of employ and have left this place in search of work (DO/WM/11)

This case evidences additional mobility beyond the initial migration away from the home parishes and serves as a reminder that the migration destinations identified in Figures 2–7 above might only represent one stop in a series of moves. In fact, in the period 1820 to 1849, people moved an average of 4.5 times, many moving just once, but others over 13 times (Pooley & Turnbull 59). Another applicant for poor relief, Charls Ann Green, writes from London to Wimborne on 9 August in the 1820s in order to obtain financial support, expressly trying to prevent her family from being removed to their legal parish of settlement in Dorset (see (7)) – her husband had satisfactory employment in London, but had injured himself and was only temporarily unable to work.

(7) and them I must Come down in the Countrey and that I Donte wish as My Husband as gote a good Shop of work to goe to wen he is able to goe (DO/WM/10)

We will revisit Green's letters again in Section 5.1.

Despite the lack of substantial evidence from the letters collected for Dorset, it seems likely, also considering the findings from Pooley and Turnbull and pauper letters from other counties presented in Section 3, that many paupers had changed abode on account of work. Regarding the socio-economic situation in Dorset, Beardmore states that "Dorset itself became synonymous with poor living conditions and low wages" (144). Wages rarely covered living costs, and an agricultural labourer earned less in Dorset than anywhere else in England (Snell 375). Times were particularly difficult after the Napoleonic Wars, especially in the 1820s and 1830s when there was a surplus of agricultural labourers (Redford 94). Food prices also soared as a result of the "Year Without a Summer" (1816) after the volcanic eruption of Mt. Tambora in Indonesia a year earlier, which adversely affected the climate on a global level, with unusually cold and wet weather causing food shortages and famines across Europe (Brönnimann & Krämer). At the close of the 1830s the proportion of paupers in Dorset was among the highest in the country (Levitt 161). The paupers in our case study undoubtedly found themselves in moments of personal and socio-economic crisis and decided to migrate in the hopes of finding better conditions elsewhere.

5 Dialect Usage and the Origin of the Paupers

The pauper letters in our corpus originate from 39 different counties, and from the letters themselves we rarely learn where an applicant was born and raised. We cannot automatically assume that the parish of legal settlement is an indication of the provenance of a person and their original dialect. As already indicated in Section 1, there were many ways in which settlement rights could be established. According to Whyte,

> [s]ettlement rights could be established on the basis of birth, marriage, and, in the nineteenth century, from a father's or even grandfather's parish of settlement. Other mechanisms, such as renting property worth £10 per annum, a year's agricultural service, completing an apprenticeship, paying taxes or serving in a parish office for a year were also grounds for gaining a settlement. (280)

Settlement rights could therefore also have been gained on a short-term basis (see Auer & Fairman). In the absence of further evidence, for example from other parish records, we explore the language of the letters with a view to finding dialect reflections. In the following we present two linguistic case studies focusing on two individuals with links with Dorset and Cumberland, respectively. Considering relevant metalinguistic information and examining the language of their letters in detail allows us to gather clues about the linguistic anchoring points of the writers.

5.1 *Case Study 1: Dorset*

In our first case study we investigate a set of letters from Charls Ann Green (986 words) in order to determine to what extent dialect reflections can be linked to a parish of legal settlement as the location where this dialect was acquired. Between 1820 and 1826, Green wrote seven letters from London to her home parish, Wimborne, in Dorset, and one undated letter survives as well. In order to identify dialect features in Green's letters, we take note of variant spellings and compare their likely pronunciation with features listed by modern sociolinguistic studies based on twentieth-century data (Wells; Wakelin; Ihalainen; Altendorf & Watt; Wagner). As mentioned in Section 1, the labouring poor generally received only little schooling at the time. In consequence, many non-standard spellings can be found in pauper letters which can be suggestive of how the writers would have pronounced words with such variant spellings.

A phonological feature typical for the South West is the "West Country burr," or hyper-rhoticity, meaning the pronunciation of /r/ after vowels, even if a word does not originally contain this consonant (Wells 341–343; Altendorf & Watt 214, 218). Charls Ann Green seems to have had this feature, writing "a torll" for *at all*, and "Laſtorll St" (for Laystall St). She probably pronounced the FACE vowel in the first syllable as a monophthong, that is, /le:/, just like the spelling "the" for *they* suggests the pronunciation /ðe:/ (Wakelin 27). The KIT vowel is lowered in "poseble" (for *possible*) and "set" (for *sit*) (Wakelin 21), but appears centralised or even backed in "woush" (for *wish*), which is not mentioned in studies based on modern data but confirmed as a feature in the nineteenth-century Dorset variety spoken by William Barnes (1801-1886) (Burton 534). Further phonological features include *h*-dropping and hypercorrect *h*-insertion as in "is Broken harm" (Altendorf & Watt 219), as well as the

pronunciation of short [ʊ] before /l/ in "triful" in "A ſmall triful to pay My Rent" (Ihalainen 255). Lastly, "fust" (for *first*) illustrates a shortening of the vowel with subsequent assimilation of /r/ to /st/. In a poem from 1802, William Holloway uses this word, with a voiced initial fricative, in "When vust I heard thy tuenful voice" (Wakelin 31; 150).

Common for the South West are also morphological features such as universal *-s* in "I hoes" and "we oes" (Ihalainen 213), as well as uninflected *do* as in "if She donte have some Money by Monday" (Ihalainen 213). On a syntactic level we find a *for to* + infinitive construction with the meaning 'in order to,' illustrated in "for to pay my way" (Wakelin 38). The final example, "My Husband hande Mendes very Slow," contains two different features found in the South West: the occurrence of the simple form rather than the progressive and the use of an adjectival form as an adverb (Wakelin 38; Wagner 431), as well as the omission of the genitive suffix which is otherwise undocumented for this county.

All these features suggest that Charls Ann Green may very well have roots in Wimborne, her parish of legal settlement, but certainly in the South West more generally. In one of her letters, she does wistfully exclaim "I woush I was in the Country a gane" (DO/WM/6). While we cannot establish a firm link between dialect provenance and the parish of legal origin (see Section 2), there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the parish does provide an anchoring point in that the dialect reflections in Green's letters are representative of the broader (dialect) area in which the parish is situated.

5.2 *Case Study 2: Cumberland*

In the previous subsection we identified dialect features in letters written to a parish in Dorset by comparing variant spellings with data drawn from modern dialect studies. For our second case study we focus on speech reflections and related methodological challenges in pauper letters from Cumberland. The main focus of the latter case study is on a set of seven letters (1,393 words) by Moses Tyson that were written during the period September 1828 to February 1830 and sent from Whitehaven to the parish of Millom, both of which were historically located in the county of Cumberland. Tyson, who was in his mid-70s, and his wife, who was in her mid-80s then, had therefore moved c. 50 km away from their parish of legal settlement but remained in Cumberland.

In order to determine characteristics of the Cumberland dialect during the Late Modern English period, which will allow for a comparison with the pauper letters, we considered meta-linguistic comments in Robert Ferguson's *Dialect of Cumberland* (1873), William Dickinson's *Glossary of Words and Phrases Pertaining to the Dialect of Cumberland* (1878), glossaries of ballads and poems in the Cumberland, as well as Joseph Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary* (1898-1905). To start with, Dickinson describes the different dialect regions in Cumberland as follows:

> The most clearly defined band or belt of dialect extends across the centre of the county, [...] To the southward of this district the words and the mode of pronunciation and expression gradually merge into those of Lancashire; to the northward, into the Scotch, and to the extreme north-east, into the Northumbrian, partaking in some measure of the burr peculiar to parts of that county. (v)

This definition already indicates, as is often the case with dialects, that clear-cut dialect boundaries are difficult to determine. As regards the nineteenth-century Cumberland dialect, Ferguson (224; 227–229) observes the following features:

- the use of *I is, Thou is* and *They is*;
- "the introduction of a phonetic *r*, most common in words beginning with *st*," for example "*scrow, strunts, strunty, straddelt*, for *scow, stunts, stunts, staddelt*, as well as *sharps* for *shaups, cherts* for *cheets, purdy* for *puddy*";
- "[t]he dropping of *l*, as in *fowthy* for *fulthy, fotter* for *falter*, &c., is a predominant feature in the Northern dialects generally, but is carried to a greater extent with us than in the others";
- old plurals, for example *owsen,* "*een, kye, shoon*"; "*childer* also is sometimes heard";
- "as elsewhere through the Northern dialect, we dispense with *s* as the sign of the genitive," for example *that's Bill meear*;
- variation in the formation of preterites, for example "*see, seed*; *sell, salt*; *come, com*; *creep, crap*; *bring, bring*; *beat, bet*; *spreed, speed*, &c. Also *split, splat*; *stick, stack*, &c.";
- "[s]o also in the past participle," for example "*get, gitten*; *come, cummen or cumt*; *stand, stooden*; *brest, brossen*; *find, fand or fun*, &c."

Ferguson's observations can be complemented by those of Dickinson (vi), who identified a range of features in his glossary, notably the contraction of *the* into *t'* (southern and centrals parts of the county); entire absence of the terminative *-ing* in all words of more than one syllable, and its being substituted by *in*, and more frequently *an*, and its retention in monosyllabic words; the affix *-ed* is compensated by an abbreviated *'t*; *-ly* and *-ish* are in frequent use as approximatives or diminutives, for example *coldy*, *coldish*, *wetly*, *wettish*; the terminative *ght* in *right*, *tight*, *sight*, and similar words, was formerly and even within living memory pronounced as *resht*, *tesht*, *seesht*, etc., or by aspirating the *gh*; a few words are common to both extremes of the county which are not used centrally, as *craa*, *haak*, etc., for *crow*, *hawk*; *one another* as *yannanudder*; *did thou* as *dudta*; as well as many contractions, corruptions, and combinations. It is noteworthy that some of these features are not only restricted to Cumberland but are considered Northern dialect features more generally (see Ihalainen 213–214).

Whether Cumberland features can also be found in the pauper letter sample will be illustrated through one of Moses Tyson's letters below. Selected features are highlighted in bold:

> Whithaven December the 4 - - - 1828
> Mr hartleey Sir I am Sorey that I have to Right
> a Gain But hard Need Maks Me Do it for our
> Money is **Dun** as it will be 2 Months Since we Gott
> it be for I Gett it and it only Leaves **hus** onley 1=S= =2=d=
> for Boath of **hus** to Live on per weeke when **our Rent and**
> **Coals is paid** Sir it is Conston Ever weeks So I
> humby Begg of you to Send **hus Sum thing** with william
> Bell as Soon as you Can and I hope the Lord will
> Give you a Blessing for it and Repeay you Dubel for
> it I have been vear Bad thes 4 weeks but I hope I Shall
> Gett Better a Geain in a Short time Sir My wife is
> a Littel Beter but is veary weake at **prisent**
> and whether She will Recover or Nott I Cannot tell
> only the wis God Knosit So I pray to God bless you
> and all your [^un INSERTED^]takings So I **hever** Remen your
> Humbel Sarvent Moses Tyſon
> [^ADDRESS^]
> to Mr Hartley
> hover Seaer
> of Millom parish
>
> [Cumbria Archive Centre, Barrow-in-Furness: Millom, BPR10/O5/2]

In the letter, we can find several speech reflections, notably *dun* and *sumthing* for *done* and *something*. We also find raising of /e/ to /i/, for example *prisent* for *present*. Apart from that, *our Rent and Coals* is followed by a verb in the singular, and we can find examples of *h*-insertion in *hus* for *us* and *hever* for *ever*.

In Moses Tyson's other letters, more examples of raising of /e/ to /i/ are observed in *Rinte* for *rent, frind* for *friend,* and *Blisin* for *blessing*. The latter example also illustrates the absence of final *-g*, as commented on by Dickinson in his glossary (1878: vi). Similarly, we find *atendin* for *attending*, and *Shilins* for *Shillings*. In addition to the *h*-insertion examples already given, some of Tyson's letters also contain *h*-insertion in *ham* for *am* (which is in variation with *am*). An example of *h*-dropping is found in one of the letters in *She as been*, and thus in the verb *has*. Another example mentioned in the meta-linguistic comments and present in the letters is the lexical item *Childer* for *children*. According to Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*, this variant can be found in Northumberland, Durham and Cumberland. He notes that "The usual expression is 'bairns' or 'barns' – 'childer' is more in use by those of Irish descent." Dickinson confirms that "a considerable portion of the labouring population, occupied in mining, draining, and other earth-works, consists of Irishmen" in Cumberland (vii). The second example present in the meta-linguistic comments concerns the variation in the formation of preterite forms where Tyson uses *Ritt* and *Rotte* for *wrote.* Similar features to those found in Tyson's letters can be found in other letters from Cumberland, for instance a regular use of *childer* for *children*, *sendin* and *goin* without the final *-g*, *Christmis* for *Christmas*, *muney* for *money*, as well as *John Porter and his too Brothers works,* and *your parisher are*.

In line with the Dorset example, the question to be discussed in the Cumberland case study, and particularly the Tyson letters, is whether the language use and speech reflections in the pauper letters allow us to anchor the writer in a specific dialect area. Based on the oral features found in Tyson's letters, but also in other letters from Cumberland, particularly the FOOT-STRUT split, many of the writers can clearly be identified as Northern dialect speakers. As for identifying a specific county and/or precise dialect region, the use of specific lexical items such as *childer* for *children* allows us to narrow the writer's dialect origin, even though this may still encompass several counties. The address of the writer (if known) and that of the parish of legal settlement also allow us to shed light on the migration radius of the paupers (see Section 4). In the case of Moses Tyson, he and his wife moved within Cumberland and therefore would

have stayed in the same (broad) dialect region. We are unfortunately not able to reconstruct any other movement, except what the letters reveal, and we therefore do not know about possible other dialect influence. Nevertheless, larger-scale comparison of pauper letters from different counties may allow us to identify differences in speech and dialect reflections in the future. More generally, the pauper letter corpus contains single letters from different applicants as well as multiple letters from the same pauper and sometimes the same writer (for details regarding the authenticity of pauper letters, see Section 2 and Gardner submitted, in preparation). While single letters by a pauper/writer may contain some relevant speech/dialect features, also depending on the writing training they have received, it could become easier to determine the dialect origin when we have more letters and therefore more linguistic features at our disposal.

6 Concluding remarks

It was the aim of this article to look at the relationship between language and mobility of Late Modern English paupers and the possibilities that the data provides for linguistic studies. As we were able to show, mobility can be traced very well on the basis of pauper letters: on the one hand, because we can trace the places where the letters were sent from and to and, on the other hand, because local dialect or oral features make a persistent appearance in written documents. We do, however, have to be aware that the places from which the letters claiming out-relief were sent may not always have been the pauper's final destination. Moreover, as discussed in Section 2, it is not always possible to determine who the writer of the letter was and, therefore, how authentic the letter is. Future research on other counties in our corpus will show whether the findings for Dorset are locally specific or whether the propensity for long-distance migration can also be observed elsewhere. It is also conceivable that our findings are linked to the specific period we are investigating, related to the Old Poor Law (c. 1795-1834). The fact that Pooley and Turnbull, in contrast, cover a period of 90 years, reaching far back into the eighteenth century, may obfuscate a temporary rise in migration distance in the earlier nineteenth century. Yet Pooley and Turnbull also investigate subsequent periods and find that average distances do not rise significantly until 1920 – and even then the average migration distance across the general population is only 55.5 km, still a good 30 km lower than that of the Dorset paupers.

Our case studies also suggest that there is no direct link between the parish of legal settlement and dialect acquisition. Nevertheless, in the letters we do sometimes find dialect and non-standard features which can give us a clue about a writer's origins. In the case of Charls Ann Green and Moses Tyson, there is enough evidence in their letters to suggest that Green's dialect roots lie in the South West and Tyson's in the North West, where their respective home parishes were situated. Once our corpus of pauper letters is complete, we will be able to test the reliability of such broad links between home parish and larger dialect area more extensively. We will also be able to see whether a larger dataset, and a larger collection of linguistic profiles and dialect features, will allow us to make a more fine-grained assessment of a writer's regional origins.

To conclude, letters written by less educated applicants are a valuable source for historical dialect studies since they can contain evidence of features which are receding or already lost by the time modern dialect surveys were undertaken. By tracking the migration patterns of paupers, we can trace possible pathways in the dissemination of local features. Even though we are dealing with small data sets and take a qualitative approach at this point, this does allow us to zoom in more closely on the data and identify detailed elements that a quantitative approach may overlook. Taking these results together in the future will allow us to identify patterns on a larger scale. Our corpus of pauper letters will be accompanied by detailed metadata information which allows users to easily access information concerning date, domicile and parish of legal settlement. In further steps we intend to document non-standard linguistic features in the metadata as well and provide a mapping tool so that the location and dissemination routes of features can be made available visually. Data gathered from pauper letters thus help close a gap in historical dialect studies and push the boundaries of the discipline back in time.[5]

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Appendix

The table below presents the dataset on which the discussion in Section 4 is based. The entries in the table are first sorted by parish of legal settlement, then by distance.

Pauper	**Year(s)**	**No. of letters**	**Parish of legal settlement**	**Domicile**	**Distance (km)**
Sarah Liddon	1824	1	Beaminster	Weymouth	40
John Bartlett	1834	4	Beaminster	Poole	66
Catherine & Henry Mills	1834-1835	4	Beaminster	Penzance	240
Philip Parsons	1800	1	Blandford Forum	Gillingham	24
Sara Pittney	1804	1	Blandford Forum	Lyndhurst	42
Samuel Lance	1800	1	Blandford Forum	Poole	42
Augustine Morgan	1803-1810	9	Blandford Forum	Beaminster	51
Daniel Stevens	1804	1	Blandford Forum	Netherbury	53
Thomas Atkins	1809	1	Blandford Forum	Brentford	160
James Headen	1810	1	Blandford Forum	Plymouth	170
Jane Donnason	1809	1	Blandford Forum	London	175
John Young	1802	1	Buckland Newton	Longburton	10
Harriott Davage	1834	1	Buckland Newton	Frome	50
Simon Warr	1803	1	Glanville Wootton	Norwich	380
Unknown	1802	1	Sturminster Marshall	Bank	42

Jane Fhithyan	1817-1820	2	Sturminster Marshall	Lyndhurst	42
Mary Shenton	1817-1820	3	Sturminster Marshall	Southampton	56
Martha Gilmore	1817	1	Sturminster Marshall	Andover	75
Susannah Fuller	1811	1	Sturminster Marshall	Egham Hill	150
Unknown	1827	1	Wimborne	Poole	8
William Flatcher	1833	1	Wimborne	Cheselbourne	28
James Dacombe	1820	1	Wimborne	Lymington	33
Jacob Powell	1819	1	Wimborne	Bridport	58
H Kendle	1826	1	Wimborne	Gosport	70
Dinah Munday	1825	1	Wimborne	Chichester	91
Charls Ann Green	1820-1826	8	Wimborne	London	164