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The NURSE~SQUARE merger in Lancashire English

The NURSE~SQUARE merger is a traditional feature Lancashire English, though it has been relatively sparsely described in the recent literature. This paper seeks to explore not only anecdotal evidence that the merger may be undergoing reversal in some Lancashire speech communities, but also recent experimental research carried out in the south Lancashire town of St Helens (Tipton 2005), which showed the merger to be very much in existence in the speech of a group of 13-15 year-old teenagers. Upcoming research will look at the status of the merger in the small market town of Newton-le-Willows, a place of conflicting regional loyalties.