Recent loss of genitive case-marking in wh-relatives in the dialects of Norfolk and Faroese

Loss of the genitive case is apparent in answers to the WHOSE frame of the Survey of English Dialects in Norfolk, in the form of unwanted responses, or prompted responses, in over 50% of Norfolk localities. This is confirmed by the non-appearance of relative whose in the tape recordings of the Francis Corpus, the remaining SED tape recordings for Norfolk, and the occasional presence of undeclined what in the whose slot, followed by a periphrasis, rather than the expected what his type of resumptive pronoun support. Reasons for this behaviour were sought in the rise of nonstandard what in the late 18th to early 20th centuries, and its replacement of earlier dialectal relatives, such as the relative particle as, and (th)at. It has recently been argued (Poussa 2004 and forthcoming) that the rise of what was the result of the operation of preposition-stranding on the compound relative adverbials, such as whereby, which are now extinct in English, though not in Icelandic, or Dutch. The new what forms seem to have replaced both particle as and a conservative genitive (th)es, the latter probably derived from the Scandinavian third-person-singular personal pronoun set. A similar development can argued for Faroese.

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