

**Biographical Background:**

Francis Orpen Morris was born on 25 March 1810, the eldest son of Admiral Henry Gage Morris, near Cork, whilst his father was on active service on the Royal Navy's Irish station. His mother, Rebecca, was the youngest daughter of the Rev. Francis Orpen, vicar of Kilgarvan, county Kerry. The family moved to England in 1824, living initially in Worcester, and, from 1826, in Charmouth, Dorset. His interest in natural history began whilst a pupil at Bromsgrove School, when he began to collect birds and insects. He left school in 1828 and, following a year with a private tutor, went up to Worcester College Oxford the following year. He read Classics, obtaining his BA in 1833. However, much of his time as a student was spent in the study of natural history, and one of his part-time tasks included arranging the collection of insects in the Ashmolean Museum.

Having decided to enter the Church, he became curate at Hanging Heaton, near Dewsbury, and was ordained Deacon by the Archbishop of York in August 1834. In January 1835 he married Anne, second daughter of Charles Sanders, of Bromsgrove. They were to have 3 sons and 6 daughters. Eventually, in November 1844, he was presented to the living of Nafferton near Driffield in East Yorkshire, where he remained vicar for nine years. This relatively small parish of 1400 persons provided him with an annual income of £40. He instigated much repair work on his church before, in 1854, moving to the Rectory of Nunburnholme, near Market Weighton in East Yorkshire, which had a much smaller population (of just 240), but a larger income. He again restored the parish church (under the direction of G. Gilbert Scott), but evidently now had even more time to study, and to look after his large collection of butterflies, moths, birds' eggs, and so on.

It was at Nafferton that his reputation as a popular writer on natural history in general and birds in particular began to grow. His first book had appeared as early as 1834, A guide to an arrangement of British birds. However, his association with Benjamin Fawcett, a local printer, was to have remarkable results, particularly for the study of ornithology. Benjamin Fawcett was one of the finest of the nineteenth century woodblock colour printers. Born in Bridlington in December 1808, he was the son of a ship's master. At the age of 14 he was apprenticed for seven years to William Forth, a Bridlington bookseller and printer. In 1831 he set up in business as a bookseller, bookbinder, music seller, printer and stationer, in Middle Street, Driffield. In 1830 he married Mary Ann Woodmansey, and they had two sons before her death in 1834. In 1848 he married Martha Porter, and they had four daughters and six sons.

Many of his early printing projects were childrens' books published by Webb & Millington of Leeds. His first association with FO Morris was in 1844 or 1845, and was to last nearly 50 years. Morris produced the text for books which Fawcett financed and printed, which were usually illustrated by AF (Frank) Lydon (1836-1917), who had started as one of Fawcett's apprentices. Unlike the earlier work of Thomas Bewick (1753-1828), printing was in colour. This was initially achieved by hand colouring wood-engraved illustrations, and later by printing in colours from multiple wood blocks. Most of the works were published by Groombridge, of London. Their first collaboration was probably *Bible natural history*, issued in sixpenny monthly parts in 1849, and completed in 1850. But their first great success was *A History of British birds*, work on which probably began in 1848. Publication, which took over seven years to complete from June 1850, was undertaken in monthly parts costing one shilling. Each part contained 24 pages of letterpress and 4 hand-coloured plates. The final six volume work contained 358 coloured plates. One thousand copies of the first part were initially produced, but such was the demand that Fawcett quickly had to move into larger

premises (East Lodge, Driffield). *Birds* was quickly followed by *A natural history of the nests and eggs of British birds* and *A history of British butterflies*, followed later by *A history of British moths*. The last collaboration between Fawcett, Morris and Lydon was *The county seats of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland*. This again ran to six volumes, each with 40 coloured plates, and text by Morris. The firm of Groombridge failed in about 1880, and it appears that neither Fawcett nor Morris made much money from their joint ventures. FO Morris died on 10 February 1893 and is buried at Nunburnholme. Fawcett had died three weeks earlier.

**Description:** This collection includes a lithograph of F O Morris (1810-1893), together with ten letters sent to him between 1850 and 1886, and 11 letters sent to Rev. M C F Morris between 1898 and 1926.

**Custodial History:** Purchased in September 1991

**Extent:** 22 items

**Related Material:**

Other papers of Rev. FO and Rev. MCF Morris [U DX21]

Photocopied papers of John Cordeaux [U DCR] (originals held by British Trust for Ornithology)

Records of the Association for the Protection of Sea Birds [U DSB]

U DP180/1	Letters to the Rev. FO Morris from: a) James Bruce, 12 January 1874 b) AS Cooper, no date c) S Earnshaw, 20 October 1875 d) Henry, 7th Baron Farnham, 24 October 1866 e) E Grimethorpe, 17 February 1886 f) Clement Jackson, 21 January 1852 g) John Ruskin (copy), 24 June 1886 h) Arthur Strickland, 4 June 1850 i) (Sir) Tatton Sykes, no date j) J Walter, 26 October 1878 10 items	4 Jun 1850- 17 Feb 1886
U DP180/2	Lithograph of the Rev. FO Morris 1 item	late 19th cent.
U DP180/3	Letters to Rev. MCF Morris from: a) Oswald Barron, 26 November 1913 b) Herbert. Bishop of Durham, 10 August 1924 c) William St. John Hope, 26 March 1919 d) JR Mortimer, 30 December 1908 e) Vincent Ransome, 11 October 1913 f) Edith Robinson, 6 October 1915 g) J Stone, 14 January 1898 h) (Lady) Edith Sykes, 11 September 1914 i) Frederick E Weatherby, 22 Feb 1914 & 23 Jun 1926 j) 'Garioch', 29 December 1915 11 items	14 Jan 1898- 23 Jun 1926