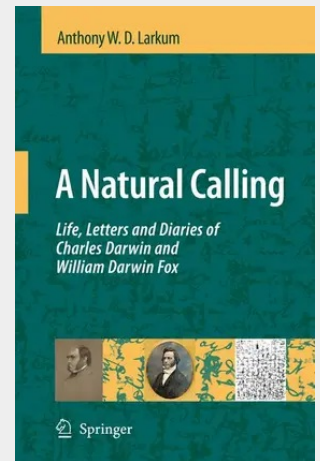


A Natural Calling

Life, Letters and Diaries of Charles Darwin and William Darwin Fox

From 1965–1968, I held an Agricultural Research Council Research Fellowship at Christ's College, Cambridge. Later in 1981, when I was a Visiting Fellow in the Department of Biochemistry, University of Cambridge and renewed my contacts with Christ's College, my friend and colleague David Coombe, a Fellow of Christ's College, informed me that a collection of letters of Charles Darwin had just been - covered in the Library storeroom, underneath the College. I had always maintained an interest in Charles Darwin, from the early age of thirteen, when I had first read his books, with I might say some difficulty! This collection was the 155 letters of Charles Darwin to his second cousin William Darwin Fox, which had been given in trust to the College, in 1909, by members of the Fox family at the time of the Darwin Centenary celebrations. I was allowed access to these 155 letters and at that time made my own transcriptions. It seemed to me that this was a magnificent account of the lives of two naturalists of the nineteenth century, starting at the time that they were at Christ's together, in 1828, and going to 1880 when W D Fox died – just two years short of the death of Charles Darwin in 1882. Of course this valuable resource had not gone unnoticed before. Darwin's son, Francis Darwin had been given the letters in the 1880s, when he was preparing his Life and Letters of Charles Darwin in 3 volumes.

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