ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been working on John Rastrick on and off since 2002 and it is a pleasure finally to be able to acknowledge the help of those who have helped me to produce this edition of his manuscript autobiography, a book that Rastrick hoped was destined for wider circulation but that has been largely forgotten for almost three hundred years.

Blowing the dust from the manuscript – metaphorically rather than literally, since it appears to have been treasured throughout this time – I was startled to read what is not only a stylish and accomplished piece of early autobiographical writing but also one that illuminates many issues in the half-century or so after the Restoration. To have rediscovered such a source was immediately thrilling; working through its detail brought further revelations that convinced me that an edition was needed. Rastrick's autobiography tells us much about religion and politics in these years, offering a uniquely personal perspective upon both national and local events from within and without the Church of England. Along the way, we can see a distinctly individual account of a minister's understanding of science and the natural world; education, reading practices, and intellectual culture; marriage, family life, feuds, and friendships. I hope that those with interests in any of these fields will find Rastrick's narrative as interesting and enlightening as I have done.

My greatest debt is to Michelle Wolfe, who brought the manuscript to my attention and suggested that we work on it together. We planned to co-write an article and jointly to edit Rastrick's manuscript. It is my misfortune that circumstances dictated that I edit this book alone: it should have been her book too.

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