Acknowledgements

One day in my childhood, I discovered, on the shelves of a bookcase at my home, a paperback copy of Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*. I was, as any nine-year-old would be, fascinated by the curious fact that I shared a surname with the author of this book, and also by the front cover image: an engraving – which I later discovered to be by William Blake – portraying a family of curly-haired Aborigines wandering through the desert. Though the contents remained inaccessible to me for another few years, that youthful moment established an interest in my fellow Chatwin which persisted throughout my childhood. When I was finally old enough to read and understand *The Songlines*, that interest developed into admiration, and a desire to read more by – and know more about – this fascinating writer. Such is the genesis of this book.

I owe a debt of gratitude to a number of people and institutions. I offer my thanks to the University of Exeter and the School of English for their support and, in particular, Robert Mack and Anthony Fothergill for their intellectual rigour and unfailing encouragement. Special thanks goes also to Bruce Woodcock at the University of Hull, who helped me get started in a number of ways.

For their commentary, insight and support, I must thank Gillon Aitken, Susannah Clapp, Robert Macfarlane and Nicholas Murray. For the use of his photographs of the chapel at Chora, many thanks to Peter Tomlinson. For their sage editorial advice, my thanks go to Jonathan Styles, Sebastian Hesse-Kastein and Claire Chatwin, as well, of course, to Matthew Frost at Manchester University Press. For her patience and support over months and years of writing, her editorial advice, her faith and her encouragement Sarah Donnelly has my sincere gratitude.

My work owes an inestimable debt to Nicholas Shakespeare. For his dedication in making accessible the details of Chatwin's complicated life, I offer my sincere thanks and admiration.

However, this work would simply not have been possible without the assistance and encouragement of Bruce's wife Elizabeth and his brother Hugh. For their magnificent support – too extensive to detail here – I offer my heartfelt thanks.

Finally, it should be noted that, despite the coincidence of that shared surname, I have no known family connection to Bruce or any of his relations.