Series editors' preface

The study of early modern Ireland has experienced a renaissance since the 1990s, with the publication of a number of major monographs examining developments in the country during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries from a variety of different perspectives. Nonetheless, these works still tend to group around traditional topics in political, military or religious history and significant gaps remain. The idea behind this new series is to identify key themes for exploration and thereby set the agenda for future research. Manchester University Press, a leading academic press with a strong record of publishing Irish related material, is the ideal home for this venture.

This is the third monograph to appear in the series. The term 'ground-breaking' is over-used in reviews but it would be entirely appropriate in this instance. The upheavals of the mid-seventeenth century in the Three Stuart kingdoms have attracted considerable scholarly attention but here David Brown ploughs exciting new ground, exposing how a small group of merchants exploited opportunities in the Atlantic tobacco, sugar and slave trades to become cash rich in the 1620s and 1630s. They returned to London at the outset of the political crisis engulfing Charles I and through a series of shrewd and timely investments, principally in Ireland, gradually assumed control of supplying the English parliamentary war effort. Their financial innovations played a key role in parliament's ultimate victory over the king and helped drive the subsequent conquests of both Ireland and Scotland. The book successfully places all these developments within the context of the emerging English global empire and suggests that the foundations of the English military-fiscal state lie in the mid rather than late seventeenth century. This work will unquestionably become required reading for those interested in the reshaping of the Atlantic world in the early modern period.

David Edwards
Micheál Ó Siochrú