Acknowledgements

This book grew out of a chance encounter with a taxation register in the Archives Municipales of Nantes during the early weeks of 1997. The city had a lasting impression on me. Unusually for the west of France, the snow lay thick on the ground, the Loire had half-frozen over and ice floes were making their way downstream, to the Bay of Biscay. It was more like the St Lawrence at Quebec than temperate Brittany. The cold weather did not last, but the question remained of why the taxation register had been drawn up, by whom and for what purpose. This enquiry led me into the wars of religion.

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