

❖ PREFACE ❖

The manuscript of the diary survives in the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge, and consists of six leather-bound volumes neatly written in ink on unruled paper.¹ The writing is in shorthand, with occasional words (mostly personal and place names) in longhand. The shorthand Pepys used was a system of 'tachygraphy' invented by Thomas Shelton (1601–?50) whose manual of instruction on the subject Pepys bought – in the 1642 edition – as a young man.² Isaac Newton occasionally employed the same system. The art of abbreviating words by means of letters or symbols is an old one – we owe to it the records of some of St Paul's Epistles and some of Cicero's Orations – and although it did not become a widespread accomplishment in its more sophisticated forms until its use in business in the late nineteenth century, it was in demand in England from Elizabethan times onwards – among lawyers and their clerks, for instance, as a means of recording evidence and case-reports, and among the general public for a variety of purposes, but particularly (with the growth of Puritanism in the seventeenth century) as a method of taking notes of sermons. Pepys, who appears to have learned it as an undergraduate, used it throughout the rest of his life both for private and official business.

The presence of the diary volumes in the Pepys Library was hardly noticed until the diary of his friend John Evelyn was published in 1818. The Master of Magdalene then arranged for a few pages to be transcribed by his uncle, the statesman Lord Grenville, who had used shorthand as a law student. With this to help him, John Smith, an undergraduate of St John's College, was employed on the gigantic task of transcribing the whole diary. A small bowdlerised selection from his fifty-four notebooks was published in 1825 by the 3rd Lord Braybrooke, the Master's brother, under the imprint of Henry Colburn. It had an immediate success, and Braybrooke was encouraged to bring out a re-issue in