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The Archaeological Survey of Merseyside was created in 1977 as a basis for setting up Merseyside's Sites and Monuments Record (SMR). Each of the five districts in Merseyside; Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton, St Helens and Wirral were surveyed individually over a five year period between 1978 and 1983. Reports were commissioned by the Department of Environment (Ancient Monuments) and Merseyside County Council 'to review the collected evidence for sites in Merseyside's rural fringes and carry out survey and assessments for such sites'.

The survey took into account evidence from documentary sources, vernacular architecture and programmes of fieldwork to identify sites in the five districts, and on completion the detailed information was incorporated into the SMR. While the Wirral report was published in 1978, the others remained available for consultation in the SMR to researchers only. Since most of the information relates to the origins of present day Merseyside it has long been planned to make this information more widely available, and with the involvement of the Merseyside Archaeological Society over the last two years this is now possible.

The articles in this journal use the four originally unpublished reports for Knowsley, Liverpool, Sefton and St Helens. These form the basis for presenting the history of the peoples of Merseyside over the last thousand years or so arising from the changing patterns of settlement and land use during that time. The original reports have been updated with the results of fieldwork and research undertaken since they were first completed.