Perhaps the most enduring contribution which Vikings made to Ireland was through their foundation of major coastal towns, most notably those at Dublin, Limerick, and Waterford. However, Vikings also established many smaller settlements which have generally received less attention. In this paper I comment on a range of Viking-influenced settlement, including raiding bases, towns, coastal stations, and rural sites. A broad definition of the word ‘Viking’ has been used to refer to people with Scandinavian cultural affiliations active outside Scandinavia. This avoids the semantic difficulties posed by ethnic labels: for example, at what point should a Scandinavian settler in Ireland be called Hiberno-Scandinavian? What of Irish people who came to dwell in Scandinavian colonies, whose children may have borne Norse names and adopted Scandinavian cultural traits? The difficulties of being over-specific with ethnic terminology has been emphasised in recent studies, where the argument has been made that ethnic identities are subjectively, rather than objectively, created or assigned. Such ambiguities carry over into the interpretation of material culture in Ireland.

The first records of Viking-attacks on Ireland relate to the 790s. Pádraig Ó Riain has suggested that the earliest form of Viking-settlement consisted of ships remaining at anchor near a shore or riverbank during a raid. The carrying of booty to Viking-ships is recorded in early Irish accounts of the
Vikings and recent discoveries in Dublin may support his theory. Linzi Simpson has uncovered five furnished warrior-graves around the site of the *dub linn* or ‘dark pool’ from which the city derives its name. Four of the five burials have carbon-14 intercept-dates of c. AD 800. The burials suggest that an early group of raiders stayed long enough to bury their dead in customary fashion. No women or children are attested at the site at this early stage.

The earliest non-violent contact recorded between Vikings and Gaels was of an economic nature. This seems to have included the payment of tribute as ‘protection money’ and the ransoming of captives. During the 830s a few high-profile Irishmen were captured and then killed ‘at the ships’ of the Vikings, presumably because ransoms had not been agreed. Irish chroniclers seem shy of recording successful negotiations; nevertheless, these can be inferred. Political figures, including Mael Dúin, king of Calatrui (Galtrim, Co. Meath), and Forannán, bishop of Armagh, were seized by Vikings in the 840s but re-appear later in the chronicle-record.

‘The Life of St Findán of Rheinau’ provides an insight into early contacts between Vikings and Gaels. Findán grew up in Leinster before traveling overseas and his Life seems to have been composed by an Irishman

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8 *Annals of Ulster*, s. a. 841 [=842]; 845 [=846] (1, 844–45); *Onomasticon Goedelicum Locorum et Tribuum Hiberniae et Scotiae* (Dublin: Hodges, Figgis & Co., 1910), 151. Forannán’s eventful career can be traced in “The Annals of Ulster: he was captured by Feidlimid mac Crimthainn, over-king of Munster, in 836, then exiled and captured by Vikings in 845. He died in 852.