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The 1962 excavation

An iron cofferdam, pumps on 6 July, and five ships salvaged after twelve weeks and one day.

Typographic only. No photographs inside. Official wording from the Viking Ship Museum's excavation page, re-opened 18 November 2026.

Moment	Official wording
The barrier	During the late Viking Age, three worn-out ships were filled with stones and sunk in the sailing channel Peberrenden. After twenty years the barrier was reinforced with two more ships. A precise sinking year is not given on the English pages re-opened for this sheet, and is not added here.
Two phases	The first phase included Skuldelev 1, 3 and 5; the second, lying on top, included Skuldelev 2 and 6. The second-phase ships were the ones most damaged by currents and ice-movement.
5–6 July 1962	On 5 July everything was ready for the excavation. On 6 July the pumps were turned on to gradually remove the water from the dammed-up area.
After a month	The water level had been reduced to 1.7 m below that of the water outside the cofferdam, and all of the five wrecks were partially exposed.
3 August 1962	An air photograph of the excavation area. The map includes the misinterpreted "ship number 4".
Ship number 4	Parts classified as ship number 2 and ship number 4 actually were parts of the same ship, the Skuldelev 2-ship. Then it was clear that the barrier consisted of five ships.
28 September	It had been estimated that the excavation would take twelve weeks. On 28 September, after twelve weeks and one day, all the five ships had been salvaged. Work inside the cofferdam was not yet finished: timbers torn away by currents and ice still lay in Peberholmshullet, a 4-5 m-deep hole to the west of the barrier.
Conservation	All the timber had to be packed in airtight plastic bags for transport to the National Museum's conservation workshop, to be submerged in large water-filled tanks.

A short quiz

1. On which dates were the team ready, and the pumps turned on?
2. What had ship number 4 turned out to be?
3. How long, almost, did the excavation take?

Answers. Ready on 5 July 1962; pumps on 6 July. Part of the Skuldelev 2-ship. Twelve weeks, and in the event twelve weeks and one day.

Wording from the Viking Ship Museum's excavation page and the five-ships page, re-opened 18 November 2026. viking-ships.nautical.im is independent of the museum and the National Museum of Denmark. Typographic sheet: no photographs inside.