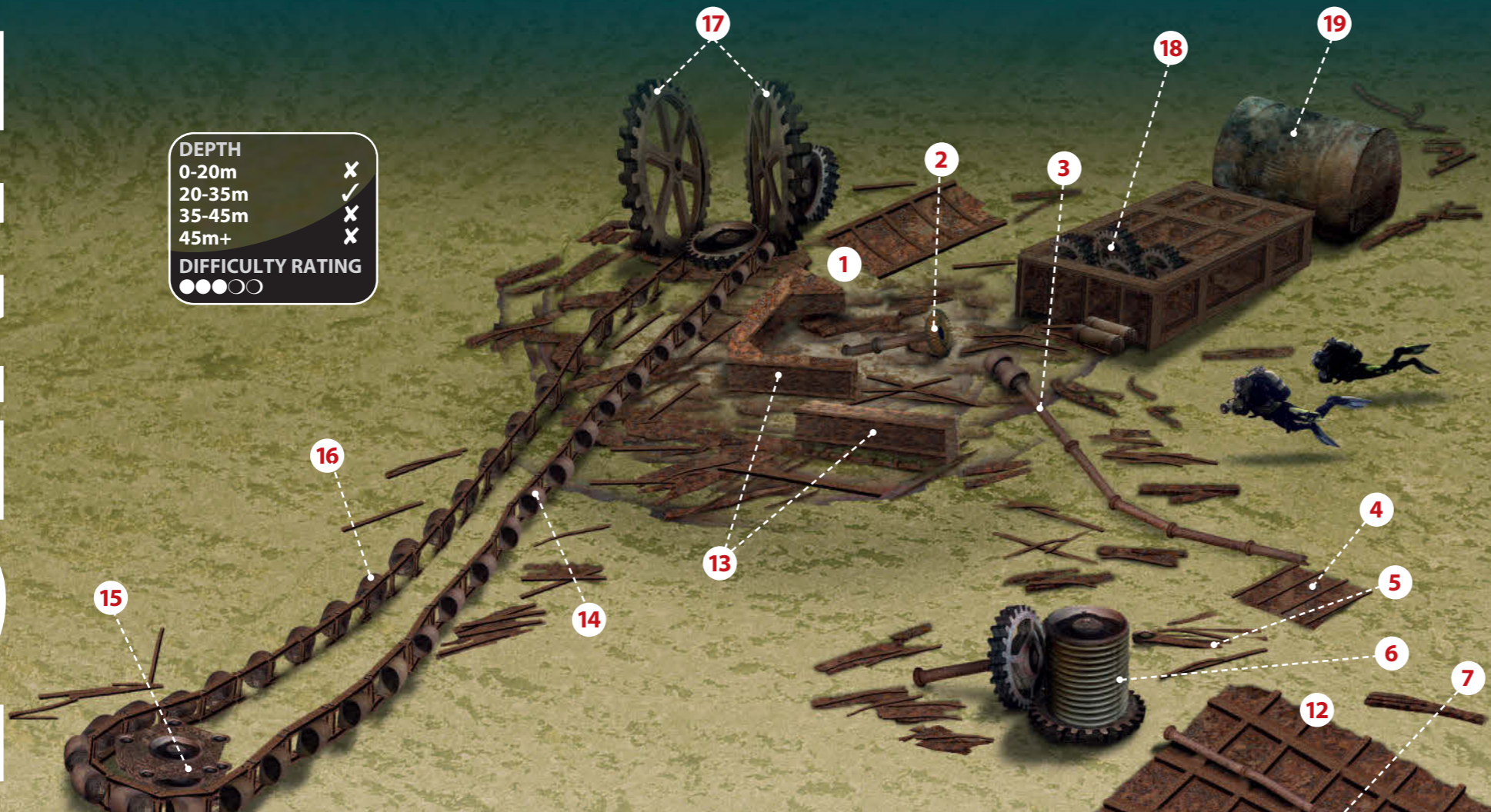


THE SENTE

DEPTH	
0-20m	X
20-35m	✓
35-45m	X
45m+	X
DIFFICULTY RATING	●●●○○



Heavy machinery from an ill-fated 1900 dredger that barely started its long journey from Scotland to Japan lies off Cork in Ireland waiting for visiting divers, says **JOHN LIDDIARD**. Illustration by **MAX ELLIS**.

THIS MONTH'S TOUR IS FOR those divers who like heavy machinery. It's the wreck of a dredger on which the hull is barely recognisable, but all the big machinery remains in a way that allows it to be mentally reassembled. The wreck is variously known as *Sento*, *Sante*, *Sente* and other permutations.

I suspect that this variation comes from a Japanese name that has been translated phonetically. We use *Sente* here, but that does not mean it is correct!

In among all the wreckage there is a high point where debris piles up to rise some 4m above the general level of the seabed (1). Graham Ferguson dropped the shot right in the middle of this mound for my dive. From here, major trails of wreckage lead off in three directions, none of which line up.

I suspect that the *Sente* broke its back as it capsized and sank in a heavy sea.

Maybe the bucket-chain arm wrenched the hull apart as the ship capsized and it fell from its stowed position. Perhaps the subsequent impact with the seabed played a part.

Depending on exactly where the shot lands, a quick circuit about the immediate surroundings should reveal the upturned engine base with gearbox projecting (18), the massive drive gears for the dredging machinery (17), some solid frame sections that would have supported them (13),

and a small bevelled gear and section of propeller-shaft.

Ignoring all the big machinery for now, we begin our tour with the small bevelled gear and shaft (2). This would originally have transferred power from the main engine, with the axis oriented along the hull, through 90° to the dredging machinery, with the axis of the drive gears oriented across the hull.

From the head of this gear, the propeller-shaft (3) leads down the slope to 29m. Solid rings round the end of the shaft are part of the thrust-bearing that would have transferred thrust from the shaft to the hull.

At the bottom of this section of shaft (4) is a section of hull-plate. If you have been following down the shaft, turn 90° to the right and a few metres' swim will bring you across a brake lever (5) for controlling a big cable-drum winch (6).

The drum is on end, and its lower end is an enormous gear. Resting against this is a second gear and section of shaft.

This is part of the mechanism to work

the winch from the main engine.

The *Sente* was constructed with its engine towards the stern and a bucket-chain that could be lowered through the forward part of the hull, so dredging towards the bow.

For long-term *Wreck Tour* followers, this is the opposite way round to how the *St Dunstan* was constructed (*Wreck Tour 40*).

This winch would have been near the head of the dredging mechanism to raise and lower it from the seabed.

Another 90° turn in our route takes us from the winch back onto the propeller-shaft and a section of hull (7) that leads most of the way to the stern.

The propshaft is bent off to starboard, where a smaller windlass-type anchor-winch (8) rests on its mounting-plate.

Dredgers are often controlled with anchors at both ends or all four corners while working.

Following the line of the hull again, after a short break we come to the tail-

section of the shaft (9) leading to a four-bladed iron propeller (10) at 30m. One blade is buried in the seabed.

Part of the stern frame remains with the rudder-post (11) lying to starboard, the southernmost extremity of the wreckage.

Reversing our path, our tour now takes us back along the hull-section (12) and to the edge of the mound of debris.

Rather than rising too far up the mound, it can be skirted to the west, past the outside of the sturdy frame sections (13) mentioned earlier.

You don't have to follow this path exactly, but I was on a rebreather and feeling stingy about wasting gas by going shallow unnecessarily.

This circuit soon intercepts the bucket-chain (14), now leading off to the north-east. A bucket-chain is exactly what its

WINTER PERILS ON ROUTE FOR JAPAN

SENTE, dredger. BUILT 1900, SUNK 1900

BOTH THE *Sente* and *St Dunstan* were constructed by Lobnitz & Co of Renfrew. Owner Henry C Lobnitz was respected for the design and construction of dredgers, though the yard built all types of ship, from trawlers to tankers.

The 217-ton *Sente* was built for the Japanese government at a cost of £20,000. After brief trials in Greenock, on 22 December 1900 the *Sente* set course for Formosa, a territory of Japan at the time, with a Japanese crew, a Chinese cook and Scottish officers and engineers.

Just two days later in St George's Channel the *Sente* got into difficulty in a typical south-westerly winter gale.

By Christmas Day the vessel had developed a list to port, and Captain Jameson moved 16 of the crew to the ship's boats, nine to the larger boat and five to the smaller, towing them astern as he pointed the *Sente* for shelter at Cork. Captain Jameson, the First Officer and

the Chief Engineer remained on board.

Making slow progress, it was Boxing Day before the *Sente* was in sight of land. With the crew in the lifeboats suffering from exposure, Captain Jameson judged the worst danger to have passed, and invited them to rejoin the ship.

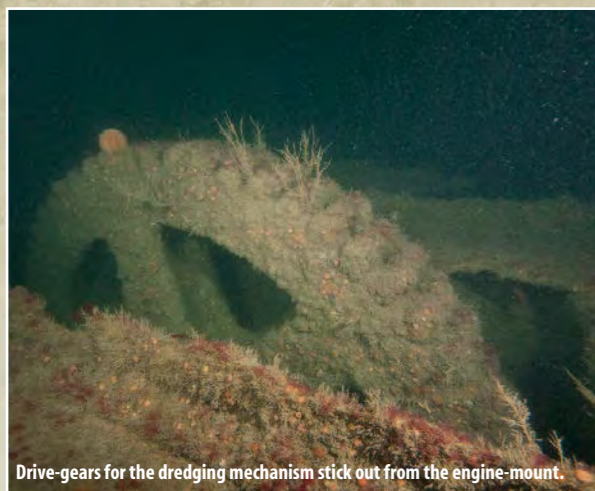
Those from the larger boat were soon back on board, but those in the smaller lifeboat declined, and remained on tow.

By 6.30 pm the *Sente* was in sight of the Daunt lightship and the pilot-boat *Maid of Erin* was approaching.

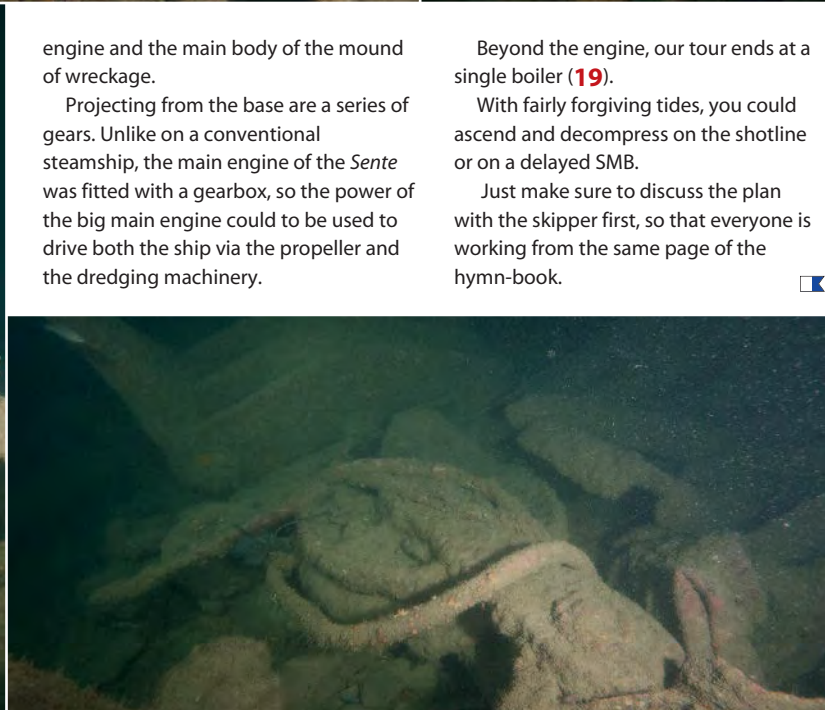
Just hours from safety, the list on the *Sente* began to increase.

The ship then suddenly capsized and sank by the stern in seconds. The five crew in the boat still under tow cut the rope and were rescued. There were no other survivors.

Why was this small ship designed for inshore use making a delivery voyage in mid-winter? That remains a mystery.



Drive-gears for the dredging mechanism stick out from the engine-mount.



engine and the main body of the mound of wreckage.

Projecting from the base are a series of gears. Unlike on a conventional steamship, the main engine of the *Sente* was fitted with a gearbox, so the power of the big main engine could be used to drive both the ship via the propeller and the dredging machinery.

Beyond the engine, our tour ends at a single boiler (19).

With fairly forgiving tides, you could ascend and decompress on the shotline or on a delayed SMB.

Just make sure to discuss the plan with the skipper first, so that everyone is working from the same page of the hymn-book. ▣

Clockwise from above left: Thrust-bearing on propeller-shaft; crank section below engine; pulley block for lowering the bucket-chain; cable-drum and drive-gear.

SOUTHERN IRELAND



4 MILES

GETTING THERE ▶ Ocean Addicts operates from Kinsale, Co Cork. Unfortunately the Swansea-Cork ferry service has ceased, so the closest ferry route from the UK is via Pembroke or Fishguard in Wales to Rosslare.

HOW TO FIND IT ▶ The GPS co-ordinates are 51 44.674N, 008 10.440W (degrees, minutes and decimals). The stern points to the south-west, but it is hard to work out where the bow points.

TOUR GUIDE

TIDES ▶ Slack water coincides with high and low water Cobh, but is only really necessary on spring tides.

DIVING & AIR ▶ Liveboard and RIB diving with Ocean Addicts, www.oceanaddicts.ie

ACCOMMODATION ▶ Ocean Addicts operates the fleet tender liveboard *Embarr*, with on-board accommodation for 12 divers.

LAUNCHING ▶ Numerous slipways are available in the estuaries at Kinsale and Cork.

QUALIFICATIONS ▶ PADI Advanced or BSAC Sports Diver.

FURTHER INFORMATION ▶ Admiralty Chart 1765, *Old Head of Kinsale to Power Head*. Cork diver Tony O'Mahony runs the website www.corkshipwrecks.net with

information on the *Sente* and many other wrecks.

PROS ▶ A perfectly sized wreck for a no-stop dive with the appropriate nitrox mix.

CONS ▶ Harder to reach now that the Swansea-Cork ferry is out of action.

Thanks to Graham and Anne Ferguson, Adrian Dziubinski, John Collins.

*Would your club or dive centre like to see its favourite wreck featured here? If you would like to help John Liddiard put together the information, why not invite him to come and dive it with you? Write to John c/o Wreck Tour at **DIVER**.*