

2. The main station on Rua do Pombal.

Most writers seem to concentrate on the Largo da Fonte station at Monte and the boiler explosion and seem to be unaware of the main station at the bottom of the track. In many ways it seems unfair that this part of the railway has gone unnoticed since it was the hub of the entire system. At least three other sites relevant to the railway have plaques giving information, but not the Rua do Pombal station.

Situated on the corner of Rua do Pombal and Rua do Comboio the station is a relatively short walk of just over half a mile from the statue of Zarco in the city. This was the starting point for a journey to Terreiro da Luta 850 metres above sea level.



The station would have been a very busy place. American style horse-drawn carriages (Carros Americano) would bring people from the city centre to the station following the route shown in red. Those arriving in basket cars (Carros de cesto) from Monte via the Rua de Santa Luzia would wait by the station for a carriage to take them back to the town. The carriages would park in Rua do Pombal the other side of the junction from the station and the baskets would wait adjacent to the station. Next to the station was the engine shed and repair facility and a goods yard.

Unlike Monte, which is a popular destination for tourists, the station at Rua do Pombal is definitely not somewhere visitors would go today unless, like me, were specifically looking for the station.

There's little reference to the station in historical documents so one can only rely on photographs to construct a story. The station building is not open but judging by the size and appearance it could have been a ticket office and waiting room on the ground floor with management and administration on the first floor. It does seem that there may have been an extension added at the back of the station on the Rua do Pombal.





One map of the area made reference to a “station house” opposite the station but a little further up the road (Rua do Comboio) in a location now occupied by a car park. While it is possible there could have been an engine shed there during the time of the railway there is no evidence today. However, there was a long industrial type building right next to the station which had every appearance of being something to do with the railway.

Through the open door it was clear that the building was now a car repair or restoration workshop and a person had just finished spraying a car panel. When he saw us near the open door he hastily rushed toward us and indicated that smoking was not allowed? I didn’t want to smoke! He clearly knew no English (and why should he?) and my Portuguese is very limited but with a few words and gestures we did establish an understanding and he was very pleased to confirm that his workshop was the very place pictured here. In the picture a carriage in the shed with another outside on the main track on the downward slope toward Rua do Pombal.



Another feature of the station is the goods yard. This area can still be identified today but is completely overgrown with vegetation.

So how did the engines or carriages get into the shed? If conventional points had been used the these would have occupied much of the yard, but, as is clear on the photo here, there no points or tracks from the main track leading into the shed.

After some searching I came across this photograph and the answer was clear. The photograph seems to suggest that a section of the main track was carried on a moveable table but with wheels set at 90 degrees to the main track so that it could carry an engine sideways. When properly aligned with the engine house track the engine could move forward into the shed.

This system widely used to transfer rolling stock from a line to parallel sheds and is known as a transfer table.

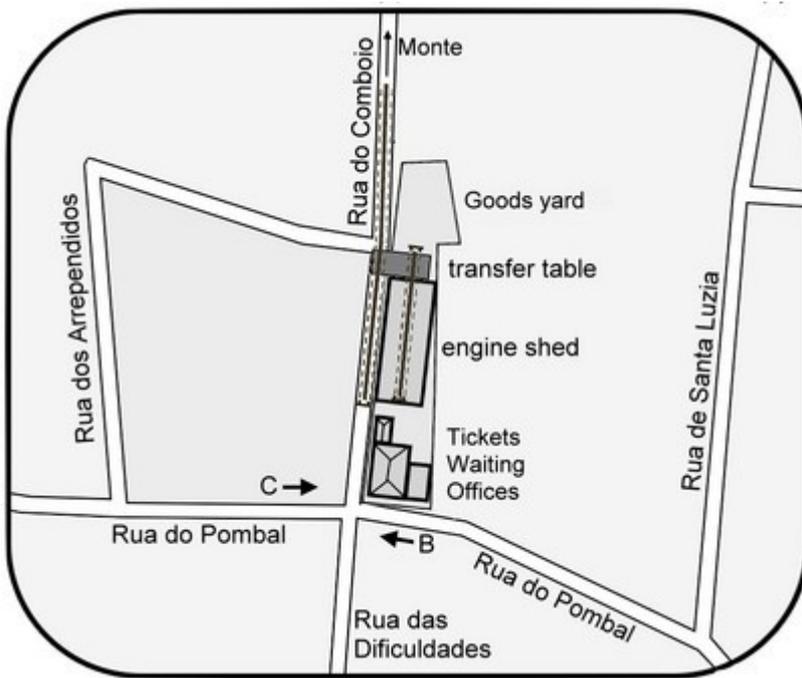


Judging by the proliferation of flags lining the track and the many spectators both in the goods yard and the vinyard opposite on the first official arrival of the train at the Pomal Station on inauguration day on 16th July 1893. The umbrellas would have been protection against the sun.

The local press reported:

“Before 10 a.m., there were already numerous groups of onlookers who parked along the entire route, where, in small spaces, masts were erected with flags and above, in the Levada de Santa Luzia, where flags also floated slightly agitated by a turn that barely attenuated the intensity of the heat. Under a swarming sun the crowd of the curious gradually held on, and long before an hour in the afternoon, the announced inauguration, it was difficult to find a place where you could be at ease. In the Levada de Santa Luzia was armed a bandstand with awning, where played the regional band of Hunters 12 after the religious ceremony. The Pombal station presented itself, decorated with flowers and vegetables.”

Text from - <https://flama-unex.blogspot.com>



The diagram gives an indication as to the probable layout of the station complex and some of the roads in the immediate area.

As it was mentioned earlier the station was the hub for three different transport systems, not just the railway but for horse drawn rail carriages running between the station and the town but also basket cars arriving via Rua de Santa Luzia from Monte. As yet it is unclear as to how the carriages turned round in such a narrow street after arrival ready for the return trip.

The American style railcars (Carros Americanos) would wait in the direction of arrow C and people arriving by basket cars would wait at B for transportation to the town. This photograph would have been taken looking east to west on Rua do Pombal with the station out of shot on the right. It shows an american style horse drawn carriage turning out of Rua do Pombal into Rua das Dificuldades taking passengers down hill back to the city centre.

The carriages ran on rails and were drawn by either two or three horses. Often when there were three horses the middle one would be white. The Rua das Dificuldades is very steep, so I would imagine three horses would have less “difficulty” going up hill?



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