

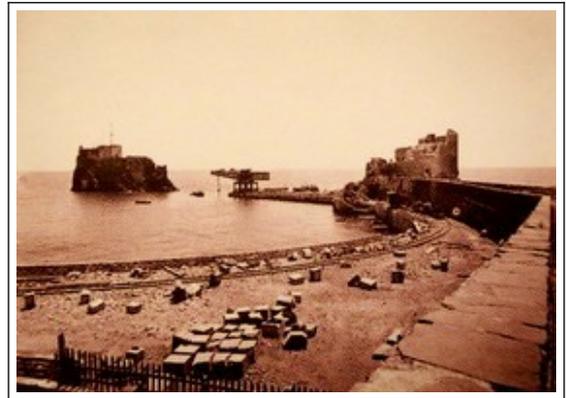
8. Construction of the harbour wall and marina



Around 1888 it was decided to build a wall to create a safe mooring for ships and defend the port area against storms. There was, a short distance offshore, a small island on which was built a small but heavy fortification built to defend Funchal against attack from the sea. The Molhe Fort (Fortaleza do Ilhéu de Nossa Senhora da Conceição) was completely isolated and not joined to the mainland in any way. It was built in 1654 and in 1682 a chapel was built inside hence the name “Nossa Senhora da Conceição”.

The plan was to build a connecting wall that would join the fort and another smaller islet to the mainland taking advantage of the robust support offered by the island. The picture on the right is believed to have been taken in 1890

It appears that in order to move the large quantities of materials that would be required a temporary railway was constructed. The picture clearly shows a railway track running round the wall.

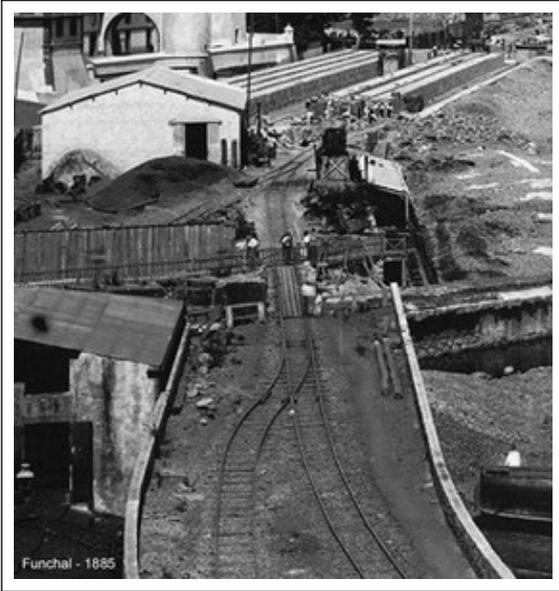


It seems the power of the sea may have been underestimated as in 1892 another storm caused significant damage to the new wall causing it to buckle inward. Clearly something better would be needed and a new construction would be a wall reinforced by the addition of a road on the leeward side.

In this picture the Fort/Palace of San Lourenço can clearly be seen beside the track. As is frequently found the date, 1885, on this picture is very confusing as the decision to start building the sea wall was not taken until at least 1888 so what was going on here?

Could it be that the sea defences along the Avenida do Mar were improved in order to protect the Palace before the breakwater.



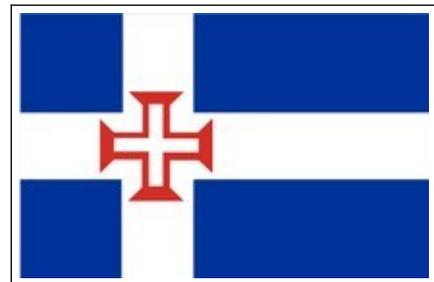


This picture, showing the same location as the one above seems. to show the track turning toward the sea. There can be no doubt about the arched buttress and tower of the Lourenco Palace in the background. It must be assumed that this picture, due to the very high point of view, was taken from a crane, or similar temporary structure.

An interesting fact

In 2000, the Madeiran art teacher Renato de Barros bought the islet and fort from the Blandys then in 2007 he decided to proclaim it to be an independent principality and himself to be called Prince Renato. He declared it to be a soverien state, called the Principality of Pontinha.

This declaration of a “micronation” has no legal recognition but is usually trivial enough to be ignored, rather than challenged, by the established nations whose territory they claim.



Above, the flag of Pontinha.

In 2020 there is a small charge of 1Euro to visit Pontinha and, dodging many sleeping cats on the way, climb to the viewpoint at the top.

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