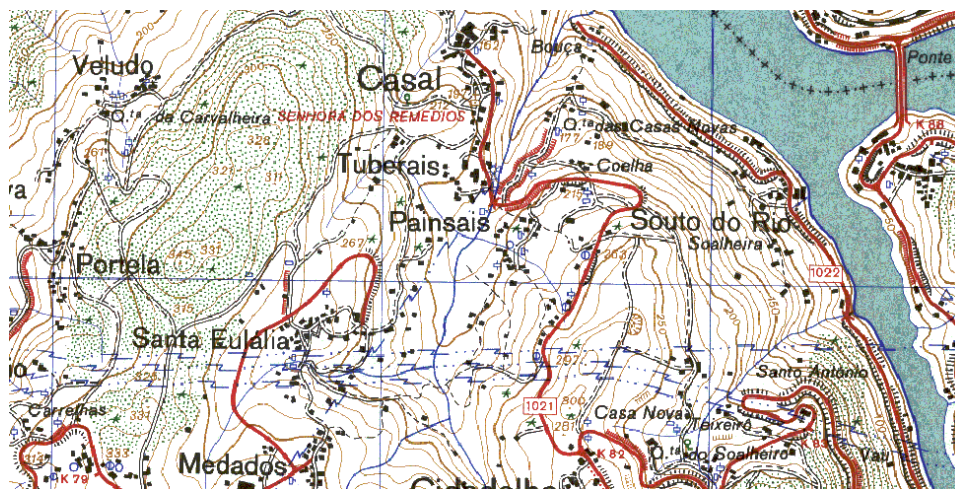


"uenderemus uobis arias maruaniz sicut uemdimus ereditate nostra propria que abuimus de subseptionem auorum uel parentorum nostrorum como etiam et de ganadela et ipsa ereditate aue iacemtia in loco predicto in uilla quos uocitant Cinfianes ad illa Portela iusta kararea que uadi pro ad riu de Bestionza" (PMH DC 9).⁴

That can be roughly translated as: "we will sell to you Arias Maruaniz as we promised with our own inheritance which we have received from our parents as also from the Ganadela and the inheritance of the fowl lying in the aforesaid place in the village called Cinfães from Portela up to the road that goes to the Bestança River".

These are legal documents recovered from the ancient monasteries that functioned as official notaries (actually, then the friars were the only that could read and write Latin), where these ancient roads are often mentioned to define the property limits. In the case here, as the property mentioned in the document was delimited at Portela (a place that still exists) while the eastern limit was defined by the 'kararea', the ancient road that ran to Bestança river mouth.



as the back ones roads. This is west was

Well, looking at the map, the referred 'kararea' seems to be referring to the ancient road that today serves as the west limit of Quinta do Soalheiro. The term 'kararea' (written today as 'carreira' from 'carro', car) implies that carts were able to circulate in them, in the sense of a proper road and not just a simple mountain trek only suitable for the passing of a man and animals in line.

A long stretch of the road still survives today, still presenting some "original" features. The commas are intended as we cannot talk about an "original" road since it has been repaired over the centuries. These roads used during the Roman period kept being used up until the 19th century, showing the resilience of these structures.

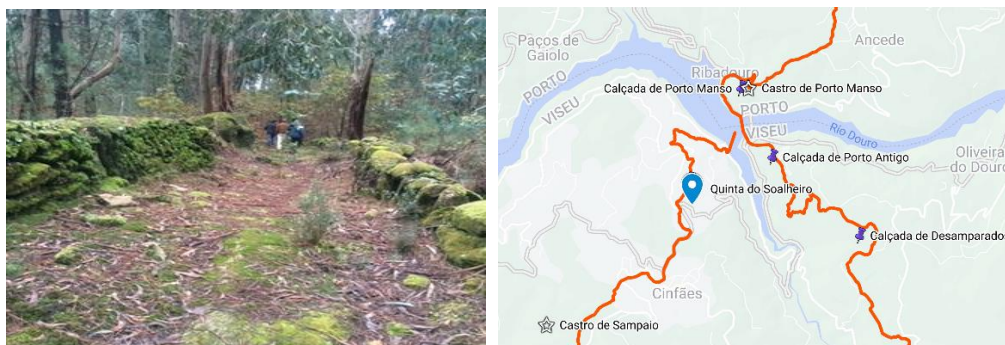


Figure 1 - Photo and map of the ancient road

The Roman Itinerary:

To the south the road crosses the town of Cinfaes next to the church and continues in the direction southwest passing at the base of an Iron Age settlement called **Castro de Sampaio**. These pre-Roman hilltop settlements were usually fortified with strong walls the Portuguese word *castro* from the Latin 'castrum' (fortified settlement). Most of them



hence have

⁴ PMH DC 615 - http://viasromanas.pt/dc/DC-615_p369_Cinfaes.html

Figure 2 - Fortified walls (in Resende, 2013)

continuation during the Roman period with some becoming administrative head of a territory, then called 'civitas'.

This could be the case of Castro de Sampaio since several inscriptions⁵, namely one consecrated to emperor Augustus.⁶ Moreover, Roman ceramics still can be found around the area of the *Castro*, as well as architectural elements as columns, capitals and cushioned stones.



Figure 3 - Inscription to Augustus (in Resende, 2016)



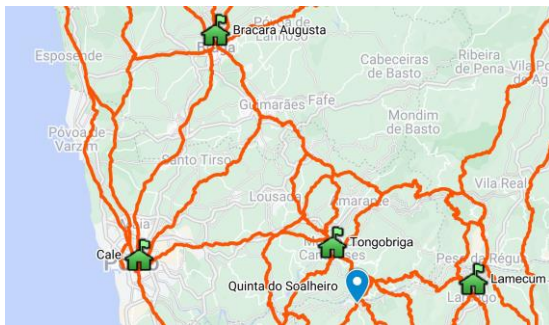
Figure 4 - wine press (in Resende, 2013)

During the

Roman period a road station was built at the base of the settlement (*mutatio*), where travellers could get some water and food after the hard ascent from the river. The carved base stone of a wine press was found inside the settlement attesting the production of wine since those times.

and

The road is part of a long itinerary that connected the Roman administrative capital of the region, *Bracara Augusta*, to the Douro River, crossing another main river (Tâmega) close to *Tongobriga*, another Iron Age settlement that become a small Roman city (open for visitors). After crossing the river, the road divides in two branches, one to Viseu, another main road junction, while the road next to Quinta do Soalheiro ran in the direction of Castro de Valinhos, another hilltop settlement overlooking the town of Arouca.



Also, in the nearby properties or *quintas* there is evidence of Roman occupation, namely in the *quintas* of Ressurgida, Paradela e Chieira. These are typically small rural houses (*casal*) as the one in the picture (41.080718, -8.082575)



Figure 5 - Excavation of Quinta da Chieira in 1997 (in Pinho & Lima, 2000: 29)

Figure 6 – Location and fragments of Roman ceramic found in Quinta do Soalheiro (in Resende, 2016)

⁵ the stela of *Flavus*, the headstone of *Cloutio*

⁶ Imp(eratori) Augusto Divi/ f(ilio) Sacrum publice.../ [I]ulius



Figure 7 - Serpa Pinto Museum (Cinfães) - funerary stela of Flavus Pissiri and the Roman coins from Paradela (in Resende, 2016)

Route description:

The route starts on the left bank of the Douro River where there was a boat to cross it. Incidentally, the road is named today as Rua do Barqueiro ('road of the boatman'), still showing the ancient pavement made of slab stones; after crossing the CM1022 (CM stands for Caminho Municipal or 'municipal way'), the road takes Rua da Soalheira.



Figure 8 - Rua do Barqueiro and Rua da Soalheira

The road keeps ascending through Calçada da Coelha ("Calçada" means cobblestone) and crosses the CM1021 twice. Next to Casa da Coelha there is a small sanctuary generally called "Alminhas" (diminutive of souls) that used to signal the route during the Middle-Age. It then follows the road next to the western wall of Quinta do Soalheiro up until Cidadelhe.



Figure 9 - Calçada da Coelha crossing the modern road next to the medieval landmark

The route then joins the EN222 through the Caminho da Ladroeira (that can be translated as 'thieves' way', as roads were always prone to robberies).



Figure 10 – The Caminho da Ladroeira joining EN222 and the Caminho da Cruz das Bouças

The route continues under the EN222 to Cinfães and there takes the Rua da Cruz da Bouças ('cruz' means cross) in the direction to Aldeia where a Roman settlement was established next to Castro de Sampaio. It seems to road had continuation to the village

of Nespereira passing in Vilar de Peso and Ervilhais (close by there's the medieval settlement of Castelo de Sanfins), and the pre-Roman settlement named Castro da Volta.

The rock inscription of Pindelo (41.011778, -8.155756): is located not far from the village of Pindelo and next to Castro da Volta. The text seems to register a *concilium* or meeting to set the territorial limits between two indigenous one called *PAESURI* and the other *SEARI*. The *Paesuri* most likely occupy the of Cinfães while the *Seari* were located to the south.⁷ The *Paesuri* are known one of the Lusitanian tribes that contributed to the construction of the famous Roman bridge over the Tagus River in Alcantara (Spain).⁸



from
tribes,
area
to be

Figure 11 - Rock inscription of Pindelo

The ancient road system:

From the above it becomes clear that these roads have an intimate relationship with the pre-Roman occupation, attesting its use long before the Roman dominance. This means that the road was in use for centuries (or even for millennia) before their arrival and thus is not exactly a Roman construction, although some repairs and improvements were certainly done on that period. The ancient road system from the Iron Age kept being used throughout the duration of the Empire and was only abandoned in 20th century with the event of motorized transportation. This means that everything will soon disappear if we do not take protection measures. Evidence of carts in Portugal can be dated back to Chalcolithic period (2500-2000 BC) so it possible that the road network had



Figure 12 - Cart representation on the stelae of Castrelo de Val, (Galicia), 1200-800 BC (in Santos-Estévez et al., 2017: 75)

emerged from this need to have proper routes for the passage of carts. However, the scarcity of the available data prevents any dating of this transformation process. We do know that by the end of Bronze Age and throughout the Iron Age these roads were already in use. The use of pavement made of slabs must have started in this period, a practice used since then to reinforce the structure of the road to better support wheeled carts, although only where there is the need to do it (Soutinho, 2021: 24).

Another typical characteristic of these roads is the way it takes advantage of the geography of the place to trace the best way to travel between two points. Obviously, this means, first of all, the shortest distance. However this does not always imply a straight line (as those on the flat lands of France or Spain), particularly when there are important obstacles in the way as mountains or rivers. In this case, these routes generally followed the top of the mountains to avoid river crossings and to minimize slope variations (). When one obstacle, as in this case the River Douro, could not be avoided, the road tries to smooth the descent by choosing a winding way that avoids slope rates greater than 10%. This is an important criterion as carts should be able to circulate here. The remaining stretch of the road next to Quinta do Soalheiro is exactly the point that the route leaves its course in altitude and start de descent to the mouth of the Bestança River in Douro. The crossing was most likely by ferry, connecting to Porto Manso (in the sense of 'tame port') on the right bank. From here, the road initiated the ascent of the mountain up until another Iron Age

⁷ Clemens [- - -] / concilium [- - -] / C R D S [- - -] / foros · Paesur · SEA / contumaces [- - -] / hic · Sear ([EE, 299](#))

⁸ See <https://viasromanas.pt/vrinfo.html#alcantara>

settlement calles Castro de Porto Manso, on a hilltop overlooking (and controlling) this passageway. The road was paved with gigantic stone slabs forming a kind of megalithic structure that still stands today⁹.



Figure 13 - Ancient Road Porto Manso

Walking through these long stretches of the ancient road, we start to imagine what it would be to travel back then. The truth is that our territory is full of a great cultural and landscape tradition, a little pinched here and there, but never “defeated” providing an unique experience in close contact with the landscape but also the people that inhabited these territories, in kind of alternative world to modern times.

Enjoy the walk!

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⁹ See <https://viasromanas.pt/blog/index.php/2019/08/26/roman-road-of-porto-manso-douro>