



4.

BRIDGE OF VEIGA



	Rua da Ponte da Veiga Torno Lousada
	41° 17' 57.72" N 8° 13' 3.55" W
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	Submitted to classification
	P. 25
	Free
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Located in the parish of Torno, in Lousada, the Bridge of Veiga joins the banks of the river Sousa between the hamlets of Rio and Cachada, along the old path from Senhora Aparecida to Unhão. Having a single slightly broken arch with narrow and long voussoirs showing stonemason's initials, this is an example of a Gothic crossing that was probably built during the first half of the 15th century.

Its foundation may be association with the Monastery of Pombeiro (Felgueiras) (p. 30) which had rights and properties in this area. This powerful religious institute was associated with two more parishes where there we may also find other medieval crossings from this region: the Bridges of Fundo de Rua (Amarante) (p. 199) and Cavez (Cabeceiras de Basto). During the Middle Ages, the monks were responsible for the construction of bridges all across Europe and many of their saints reflect such ability. In Portugal, our utmost example is Saint Gonçalo of Amarante (p. 278). Besides, friar Amaro - the commendatory abbot of the Monastery of Pombeiro -, who arrived in Torno in 1446 fleeing from the plague, might have easily commissioned this work.



The Bridge of Veiga, with local or regional significance, fits into the parish or municipal road network unlike other crossings that served the regional or inter-regional traffic flow.

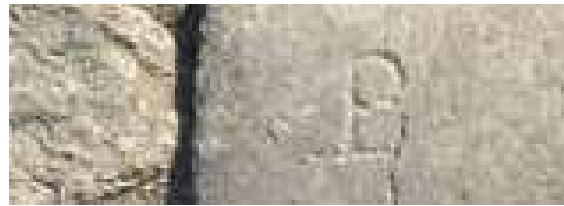
The small Bridge of Veiga was dismantled and rebuilt a little further downstream from its original location, thus allowing the construction of a new crossing that could be used by motor vehicles. This reconstruction allows to have better understanding of how a stone bridge was built, according to different steps: the choice of the location, the draft and approval of the project, the cutting and transportation of the stone and other building materials, the paving and later additions, improvements and reconstructions.

The construction of bridges in Portugal during the Middle Ages was the result of the intervention of lay and ecclesiastical lords. In life or after death, monarchs, bishops and lords left legacies for the construction of crossings, which were important for local development and for the assertion of their power over the territory. Within this context, the works were commissioned to master stonemasons who, together with the commissioner, would select the most advantageous project.

After choosing the location and approving the design, it was time to look for a quarry that could supply the construction site, both due to its location and to its type of stone. After the transporta-

tion, the instruments required to cut and rough-hew the ashlar and to place them in the structure were prepared. In order to build the arch, it was necessary to have a wooden mould called centring, upon which the previously cut voussoirs were laid. After the centring was removed, the bridge's sturdiness was a result of the quality of its joints which did not require the use of any kind of mortar. The keystone should be a single piece in order to close the arch with the required stability.

After the arch was finished, the abutment was completed and the intrados was filled in order to build the platform that, in the case of Gothic bridges, is shaped like a trestle. Finally, the ground was paved and the parapets that prevented motor vehicles



and people from going in the wrong direction or falling off the structure were built. There were several trades involved in this work; first of all, there were stonemasons, then carpenters (who were responsible for making the centring, the hoists and other instruments for the transportation and assembling of the ashlar), blacksmiths (who made the instruments for cutting and rough-hewing stone) and workers hired on a daily basis.

BRIDGES IN THE MIDDLE AGES

The site chosen for the construction of bridges depended on numerous factors, but the main one was the previous existence of a circulation channel with the necessary importance for a stone crossing. Although the Middle Ages were a particularly active period in terms of construction and reconstruction of bridges (for example, with the reuse of Roman bridges), the crossing of water courses was still made on foot (by using stepping stones), through wooden pontoons or by boat - a method that was especially used in the Douro, where the river's width did not allow the construction of bridges.
