



BERETTA MILL

You can find this point of interest in Como 6 – Stage 2.

INFORMATION

Location: the ancient Beretta Mill is located in via Navedano 21 in Camnago Volta-Como

Paving: the courtyard is variously paved with sections of gravel, paving, concrete and cobblestones

Architectural barriers: to access the room where the mill equipment is located it is necessary to cross a stone threshold

Access: from the courtyard in via Navedano 21

Services: city bus stop in via Vincenzo Franchi; ATM and shop in via della Pila

Leisure and Catering: two restaurants in the various hamlets of Camnago

Other information: contact directly the owner, the Muscionico family, tel. 031.561363, cell. 334.9529224.

DESCRIPTION

(by Franca Ronchetti Bralla)

The milling activity has been practiced along the Cosia Valley from ancient times; at the beginning of Via Pannilani, you can still see a slightly yellowed marble plaque, indicating that there were three mills about 0.8 km away. Until shortly after the end of the Second World War, five mills were still operating in Camnago Volta: the Longatti mill in Campora, the Trombetta mill in the area below the current New Cemetery, the Malacrida mill near the Navedano, once the place of a restaurant of the same name, the Arcellaschi mill in Ravanera, now replaced by a residential villa, and the Beretta mill under the Paradiso farmhouse. Then, at the beginning of the fifties of the last century, four mills slowly disappeared and only the Beretta Mill resisted the competition of the most sophisticated and inexorable electric millstones until 1983, when it ceased activity, while maintaining its equipment (hoppers, millstones, gears, tumblers). It is a true heirloom that still preserves intact all its apparatus and is the only one to have maintained its original structure, complete with an external wooden wheel. This water mill, which was a low-cost energy source, now represents a now remote art, that of milling, and constitutes a heritage of historical memory that must remain indelible in order to show enthusiasts the “jaws” of the old millstones from which flours of all kinds came out: local flour, the finest and lightest in colour, the coveted one for polenta, then the flour for yellow bread (now disappeared from our tables) and the wholemeal wheat and rye flour. Its history is very ancient: at the time of Volta there was already a convent with an adjoining mill (it is registered in 1720), purchased by the Beretta family in 1892. The mill, located in a typical Lombard “U” shaped courtyard, preserves the memory of ancient peasant life; at the entrance, in fact, on the wall on the left, you can admire a devotional fresco, recently restored, depicting the *Madonna and Child*: behind her adoring angels and on the sides, as if to help her watch over the house and its inhabitants, *Sant’Antonio Abate* and *San Rocco*, protectors from the epidemics of men and domestic animals.

From the courtyard you can still admire the mill wheel, located in the open air, protected by a cover, between the old part of the farmhouse and the recently built one. When the mill was in operation, a small mill race fed by the Roggia Molinara descended from the road in front of it, which, at a certain point, made a difference in height and made the water roar, in a cascade, onto the huge larch wheel. The interior of the mill has wooden beams. A staircase leads to the upper floor, also consisting of a wooden platform. Upstairs there is the millstone department surmounted by large hoppers that poured grains of wheat then crushed by the violent friction of two rotating stone surfaces and past downstairs by a perfect set of conveyor belts, where the flour thus obtained was selected from the bran passing over several sieves. The work rate of the old mill was seventy to eighty kilos of ground flour per hour.