



Cover photograph: Bruno Zanzottera  
 Illustrations: Luca Dell'Uomo  
 Graphic design: Immedia  
 Interpretative arrangements: Luigi Mattarelli - Grafkamente  
 Texts: Nevio Agostini, Alessandro Fani e Davide Alberti  
 Editoria: Servizio Promozione, Conservazione, Ricerca e Divulgazione della Natura - Ente Parco  
 Created by: Nevio Agostini

This is the story of Fiumicello  
 From Valbagota up to Sassello  
 Of Tuscan breed, some Romagnolo  
 Mixed the dialect as done in Corniolo  
 The Priest, the Inkeeper, near or far  
 Miller, shepherd, and more the peasants  
 All included about three hundred  
 Much work, enough hardship.  
 This is the story, with many troubles  
 For those who have not lived it's fables  
 The facts are true, of remote days

The living are old, and most are dead.  
 Now it's all silent, and gives you the shivers  
 Flora and fauna give us fresh air  
 Oxygen is plenty, this is a gift which  
 erases the danger of Ozone hole  
 Good health oh wayfarer, halt a while  
 Look and observe, respect the environment  
 If you're hungry there is a restaurant.  
 If you're thirsty fresh-water is plenty and costs  
 nothing.

Domenico Mengozzi

Best period: May to November  
 Walking time (including stops and return): 2 hours.  
 Gradient uphill: 100 m.  
 Total distance (loop trail): about 2 kilometers.

difficult times in these inhospitable slopes of the Apennines.  
 the hard work, to the imagination and creativity and achievements, of the people who lived through  
 until the early 1960s. The mill has been recently restored to its function and today bearing witness to  
 one exception though: the Mengozzi Mill, owned by the Mengozzi family for centuries and still active  
 land. Many are the signs left by the peasant world, albeit now silent and lacking their functionality, with  
 agricultural landscape, and of the vicissitudes that afterwards have conditioned the evolution of this  
 years ago, more than 200 people lived in the numerous scattered farms of this area. The Nature Trail  
 is, in this case, a "Culture Trail" and thus enabling us to re-discover some features of the traditional  
 Fiumicello is a locality of Premilcuore, today only inhabited by less than a dozen people but, only 40

## Welcome to the valley of Fiumicello

### NATURE TRAIL

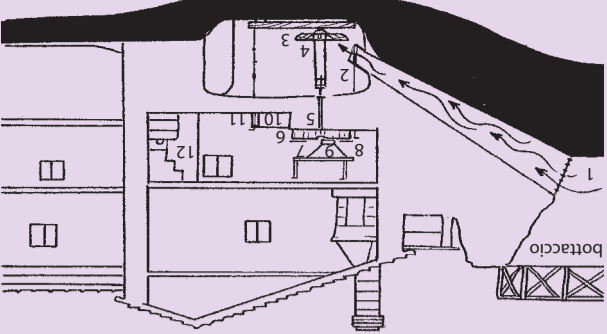
### NATURE TRAIL

# Fiumicello

The Mengozzi mill and traces of man's labour



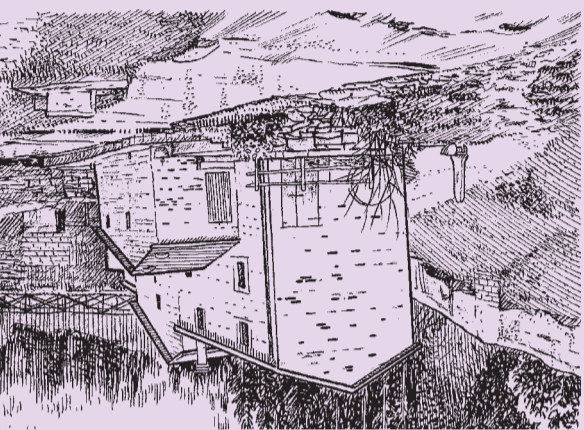
Parco Nazionale  
 Foreste Casentinesi  
 Monte Falterona  
 e Campigna



The Mill has three floors, the top is the family residence; it has a stone service "staircase" (12). In the lower floor is the "turbine" (4), a wheel with oak spoons "rètrécine" resting on wooden "bench" (3) moved by the water flowing from the "channel" (1), provided with a "slide gate valve" (2). The wheel moves the two millstones above by means of a beam. The gap between the two millstones is regulated by a "lifting device" (11). The lower millstone, or counter millstone (5), is anchored to the floor whereas the upper millstone (6) is connected with the beam. During the grinding phase flour falls from the edges, tending to fall on the floor and in order to prevent that the two millstones are enclosed by a wooden casing with a lid (7), with a hole above from which the grain to be ground fall. Above the opening of the upper millstone there is a wooden funnel in the shape of a truncated upturned pyramid called "tramoggia" (9), from which the grain falls. This is provided with a gutter-like metering "docciola" (8), which regulates the fall of the grain or chestnuts, as the case may be. On one side of the "tramoggia" there is a wooden latch (notola) that rests inferiorly on the upper face of the movable millstone, the movement which it receives transmits the vibrations to the tramoggia, causing the grain to fall gradually in the milling system. The flour produced is collected in the "matriccio" (10). A stone trough positioned beside the millstone.

### HALTING POINT 2

### The Mill: instructions for use



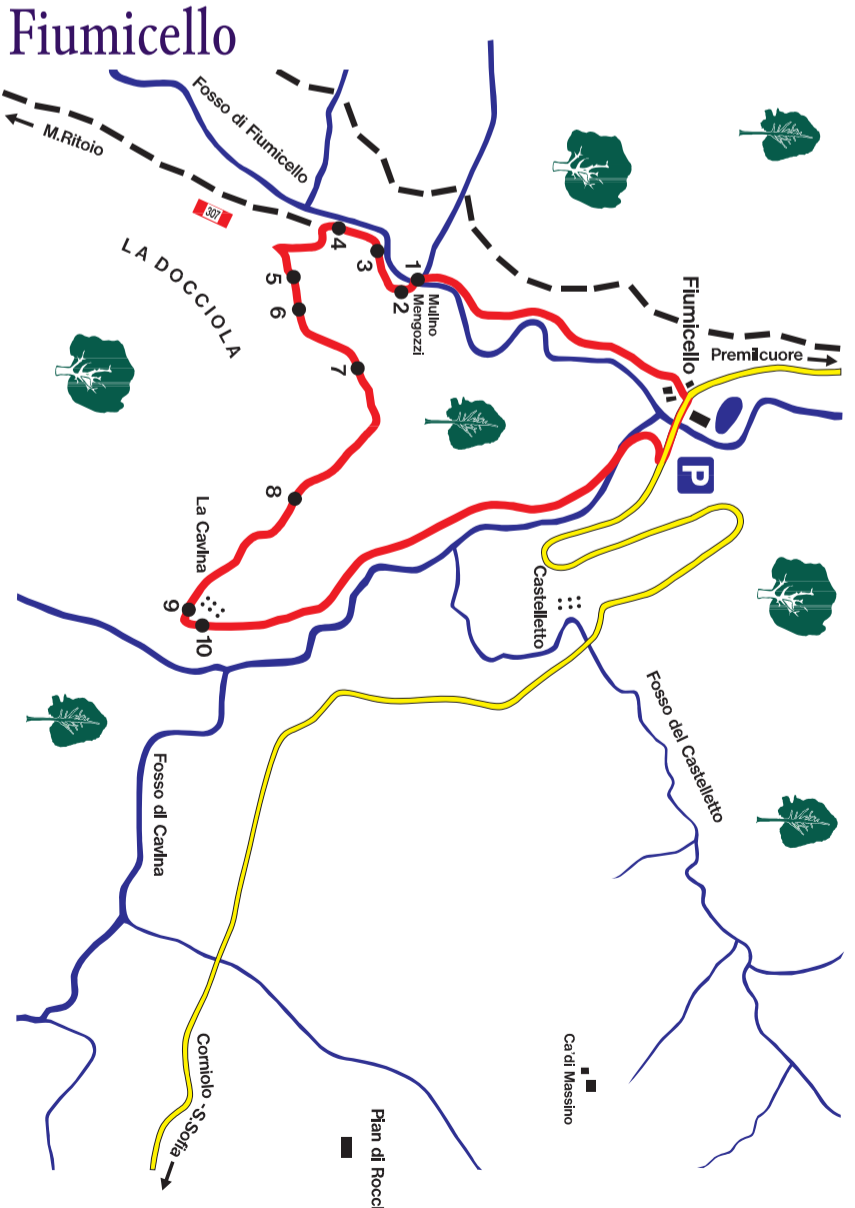
Today the whole structure is working in every part and the Mill is an important witness to the historical memory of traditional peasant life of a practically vanished world. For those who visit the Park, learning of the events connected with the Mill is therefore a rare opportunity for adding to one's own education and culture. The rhyme which you will find in the hoarding along the trail was written by **Domenico Mengozzi**, a great protagonist in the rebirth of the Mill, and author of many fine sandstone sculptures which you will admire along the trail. Unfortunately Domenico died in 2006, and today his brothers keep the Mill going and keep a memory of the past in these remote valleys of the Apennines.

### HALTING POINT 1

### The Mengozzi family Mill

The mill before your eyes belongs to the **Mengozzi family** and for centuries has been a vital part of the economy of this mountain district: in 1963 the activity ceased and the mill was abandoned, while the building was occasionally used only for its residential part. In the following years the Mill became subject to incipient deterioration, until the Mengozzi brothers, not only for nostalgia about the olden times, but with the determination of wanting to see again after 30 years of "stillness", the Mill resumed its function as a symbol of the pride for a glorious past.

### NATURE TRAIL



Getting there: from the Romagna side take highway SP3 of the Rabbi up to the mountain of Premilcuore. From Arezzo go up the "Umbro-Casentinese" highway, to the Calla Pass and up to Corniolo take for Passo della Braccina. From the Tuscany side follow the SS67 highway to Passo del Muraglione and divert on the SP3 in the direction of Premilcuore.



### HALTING POINT 3

#### Hydraulic power and vital energy

The pool in front of you is the **"bottaccio"**: a water collecting pool, fed by the var **"gora"**, a canal connecting the river to the mill. The **"bottaccio"** is also an important resource for the environment: in fact its water hosts a variety of water fauna, such as the Italian Stream Frog and the Common Toad. In the nearby stream it is possible to find more interesting amphibians, such as the frogs: Agile frog *Rana dalmatina*, and Apennine firebelly toad *Bombina pachypus*, and the Northern spectacled salamander *Salamandrina perspicillata*. Look carefully in the water: you might see gelatinous clusters or long cords floating: this in the first case will be Apennine frog eggs, while in the second case toad eggs. In the case of *Rana Apennine* between March and April is done spawning, from which emerge small larvae, which will develop in tadpoles with gills to allow the new living beings to breathe underwater. After about two or three months, the metamorphosis to the adult stage will be accomplished: the hind legs will have developed and the front ones will have just appeared, the tail has disappeared and the gills are now replaced by lungs.



The digestive system is changed and diet changes from vegetarian to carnivorous, while the mouth takes on the typical appearance of the adult frog. It's been more than three months from the spawning: now the frog can breathe out of water and bring life to the ground, even if it will remain forever linked to wetland habitats.

### HALTING POINT 5

#### From the cornfield to the fir forest.

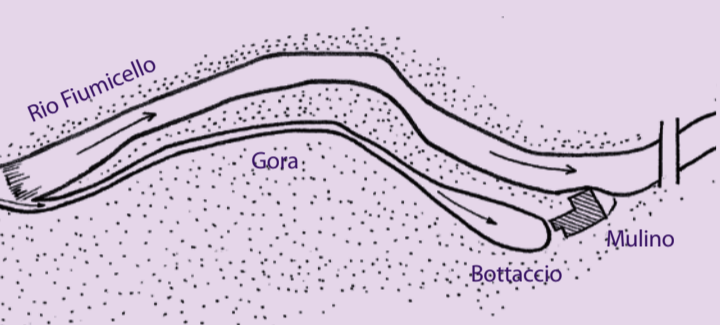
These places, now used for conifer reforestation, were once cornfields. The surrounding area was divided into farming estates, with a similar shape to the one that you will come across in the cultivated hills of Romagna and Tuscany. In the neighborhood of Fiumicello there was a dense network of farmhouses, connected by a comprehensive network of field lanes and cart tracks: today, very few of these houses still exist, most are only barely visible ruins. By analyzing census data, we note that between 1961 and 1970 an exodus took place in this area which brings to mind those that occurred before a war or a plague in times past: only in the district of Premilcuore, after the decade in question, 80% of the municipal area was abandoned. It was, therefore, a revolution, which effectively erased a centuries old culture. The decisive transformation of the territory with the spread of forested areas over formerly cultivated fields, was the direct consequence of this exodus from mountain areas. The State decided to buy this land and started a great plan of reforestation: first through the ASFD (State Company for State Forests) and subsequently with the Regional Company for Forest (ARF). From 1958 to today reforestation with fir has involved almost all the formerly arable and grazing land, a total area of about 6,500 hectares.



### HALTING POINT 4

#### The water intake, the pool, the canal

We have just walked the trail that from the pool, leads to the **connecting canal (gora)** taking us to the water intake, or in other words, to where the water of the torrent it directed by means of the canal to feed the mill, by means of a weir made of a thick plank of chestnut wood 50 cm wide placed transverse to the current of the water. By means of this artificial closure the water level rises and runs laterally towards the mill. The intake is also provided with a control gate, which serves to control the amount of water entering the connecting canal (gora), a ditch dug directly in the ground and equipped, along its course, with overflow openings through which we give free way to the water or stop it, facilitating a discharge from the gora. The Mengozzi Mill has three overflows one of which, the nearest to the building, has the name of "too full". The water of the canal is sent to fill the pool, the basin which is a progressive widening of the canal. From here the water falls through a funnel-shaped opening directly on the hydraulic wheel which moves the millstones. The conic shape of the funnel opening and the 8 metres high fall of the water causes a strong pressure of the water, which vehemently hits the blades, "spoons", of the horizontal turbines.



### HALTING POINT 6

#### The Forest at the service of Man

The forest is an environment where various human activities have developed: loggers, craftsmen, charcoal burners, hunters, gatherers of wild fruits are the "poor" trades linked to this habitat. The forest was first a reserve for firewood and by looking around we see traces at this point of the trail: here the forest is "coppice", or subject to cuts, removal of the logs and stumps were left to grow new trunks for poles and beams "pollards." Associated with coppice was another human endeavor: charcoal burning. The **"carbonaie"** transformed logs into charcoal. Especially in beech forests the areas are still visible where charcoal burning structures had existed, they were conical structures made of logs of different sizes: in the core of the cone four sturdy poles created the combustion chamber. The outer pile made of logs was covered with earth, which, by choking the fire, caused a slow flameless combustion, ideal for the formation of charcoal. Charcoal burning was widespread and it seems that at the end of the nineteenth century only in mountainous Romagna, 1,300 to 1,500 workers were employed in the production and transport of coal. The activity decreased after World War II: in 1971 only 30 charcoal burners remained active, and all of them about to retire from the business.



### HALTING POINT 7

#### The small, great works

The small wall that stands before you was built in dry stone, which means with stone blocks suitably prepared without the use of binders or mortars. Administrations worked on these territories to prevent serious disruptions and erosion of the soil, and to prevent damage to the valley bottom where the presence of housing persisted. The main works carried out in the 60s and 70s were water/forestry restorations, soil conservation works, reconstruction of degraded forests and road construction, thanks to this intervention the conditions for the development of a mountain district were created, aimed at keeping the resident populations in these localities of the Apennines. The merit for this new regional planning should also be recognized to Nature itself, which, in the face of depopulation, has triggered a processes of naturalization. In this context, **dry walls**, as well as representing the typical elements of the traditional agricultural landscape and bearing witness to the presence of man, are of considerable importance from the point of view of nature itself. The presence in a confined space of a variety of different environments, with alternating hot and cold spaces, humid and dry, offer an opportunity for the settlement of interesting plant species and a shelter for small animals: they will make it easy to observe insects, spiders, snails and numerous reptiles, including the wall lizard, the green lizard, the slow worm.



### HALTING POINT 9

#### Stone houses

We are in front of "La Cavina", one of the many examples of **scattered rural houses**, the type of housing settlement more frequent in the mountainous area of Romagna, developed since the 15th century as part of the traditional relations of sharecropping (mezzadria). But the rural house not only absolved need for housing, it actually represented functional premises to the agricultural activity, it provided shelter for animals and storage for tools and stock of crop storage. Homes like "The Cavina" were always equipped with a threshing floor, a paved ground at the edge of which stood several outbuildings used as sheds, stables, barns, where some agricultural processing was carried out, such as threshing and peeling maize cobs. Peasant houses were the environment in which the skills of the mountain peasant became manifest, he was able to make or build practically everything: walls, doors, stools, furniture, cots, ropes, fences and clogs. His skills, then, included the drying rabbits and hares skins and the rearing of livestock. To examine the remains of this rural house makes us appreciate the charm of such buildings, made from materials available locally, such as sandstone rocks, lime extracted from firing limestone in furnaces, sand and stones from the river bed and timbers from the forests. The entrance doors, still visible, are the most visible symbol of the beauty of these houses that are disappearing: a thousand-year heritage of mountain culture gone.



### HALTING POINT 8

#### Wild fauna: an ancient presence

Many traces prove the presence of wildlife in this area. One of the most obvious signs is the debarking of the trees: they are scars that demonstrate the passage of the largest specimen in the Park: the red deer. This elegant animal feeds on the bark of trees, especially in winter, when the availability of other resources is minimal. Fallow deer, european roe deer and wild boar are the other ungulates, along with the red deer, which populate the Park today: this strange name (ungulates = bearing nails) is due to the particular morphology of their limbs and the presence of durable toenails forming a hoof. In past periods when this territory was devoted to crops and pasture these species were unknown to the inhabitants of the area, which, on the contrary, they were accustomed to the presence of species linked to agricultural ecosystem, such as partridges, hares, blackbirds and larks. The current biodiversity is somehow reminiscent of the wealth of nature before human settlement: in ancient place-names we can still find reference to the presence of some species still missing, such as the bear, and other which returned. Think of the wolf, the main apex predator in the food chain, today one of the symbols of the National Park.



### HALTING POINT 10

#### The transformation of the landscape

We are facing an interesting observation point for interpreting the landscape. The territory shows a physiognomy with non-homogeneous ground covers and with the presence of trees species introduced by man. The geology consists essentially of marl, characterized by a reduced fertility and causing erosion. It is an area that clearly speaks of the fatigue that the inhabitants of the area must have endured to rip their subsistence from the mountain. The geological instability is barely visible today thanks to widespread reforestation with **black pine Pinus nigra**, a conifer evident in front of us: it is a frugal species, able to adapt to adverse conditions. The areas of exposed and eroded rock, enclosed in reforestation, were called "sgaie": much larger in the past, they were used by the farmers for the drying of maize, as they were facing



south. Above the reforestation with black pine, the presence of a deciduous tree is well visible, the **Neapolitan alder Alnus cordata**, often used to consolidate soils prone to landslides and slopes, especially near roads: these plants can feed the soil with their ability to fix nitrogen from the roots and also issue "suckers" from their roots, without being particularly intrusive. Above the road these are visible, while upstream the landscape presents the typical bush of abandoned areas.