# THE MILL

Ph. Antonio Leo © FAI

The presence of a cereal mill at Cerrate is confirmed by the sources as far back as **1667** during a pastoral visit by Monsignor Luigi Pappacoda. Traces of this structure were rediscovered in the northern building: a limestone base with signs of manufacturing and circular grooves resulting from an animal walking round and round. The mill that was found in the southern building has now been sited on this ancient base, slotting in perfectly to the existing housing. This is a rare and significant example of a traditional **milling machine** with grindstones driven by animal power.

This milling technique, common to all rural areas of Italy, remained unaltered for centuries, even after the introduction of steam power and electricity. The absence of watercourses on the flat plains of the so-called "Terra d'Otranto" (the current provinces of Lecce, Brindisi and Taranto) facilitated, over the centuries, the spread of this type of animal-powered mill (known as a centimolo, deriving from *centimulus*, an instrument for grinding driven by a mule or a donkey), in contrast to the water-driven mills found in the area called Terra di Capitanata (today's province of Foggia) and in part of the Terra di Bari.

## THE DIORAMA OF THE MILL

The model **reproduces** on a small scale (1:10) the **original cereal mill**. It was made thanks to the input of various forms of expertise and traditional skills, with contributions from experts in terracotta manger scenes and a workshop specialising in ensuring the sustainability and use of the machinery. To work out the right proportions between space and user, a cross-section was reproduced of the room that houses the mill, along with a model of a person wearing the typical garments of the Salentine countryside in the 19th century.
The **mechanical movement** of the model illustrates the functionality of the machinery and gives users the chance to try it out for themselves.

## FUNCTIONALITY

The mechanism of the **grindstone mill** is composed of a **vertical shaft** (or rotating shaft), over which are inserted the **hopper**, which conveys the grain to the centre, and two limestone **grindstones** set horizontally one on top of the other within a basin: the lower, which is almost always fixed, and its upper, rotating counterpart. The grain introduced by the hopper passes across a small empty space between the stones and is crushed by pressure and friction. The adjustable distance between the grindstones determines the grain size of the milled product.

## RELOCATION

When the abbey was entrusted to FAI, the mill was located in the southern building. Having been **turned into a museum piece** at the Museum of Popular Arts and Traditions of the Salento Area, it was sited in a position that prevented its components from moving and, due to its bulk, it was impossible for visitors to get a real sense of the architecture of the space. FAI thus decided to move the mill to the northern building, where **traces of a previous milling machine** – dating from the same time and using the same technology– had been discovered. The relocation, which followed a painstaking restoration of all the wooden parts, constitutes a philologically and historically accurate operation and has made it possible to reinstate the machinery in what was, in all probability, its original setting.

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