

ALTERNATIVE FUNERALS

Funerals can take place in many different forms

Death is an inevitability that not everyone wants to contemplate, however, there does come a time when a decision has to be made regarding a family's wishes. This usually leads to a traditional burial or cremation in a spiritual setting. However, non traditional methods of laying someone to rest are becoming increasingly more common. With the ever increasing problems with space, these methods offer an alternative. Here are some of the more radical ways to care for the deceased.

CRYOMATION

Incinerator Replacement Technology Ltd specialises in systems that provide environmentally cleaner alternatives to traditional incineration. Cryomation is an automated process which involves immersing the deceased in liquid nitrogen to -196 degrees.

The process uses pressure to fragment the body into smaller particles allowing for the removal of foreign material. Chemical and freeze drying processes continue to produce sterile granular remains which are void of any bacteria. The Cryomator is used in this process and works as an automated unit.

There is no human intervention needed from the point the coffin is loaded until the packaged remains emerge following the process. This makes the process totally clean with no risk of any cross contamination. The Cryomator with one unit can handle up to six bodies per day and more freeze drying units can be added to reduce costs even further.

There are various benefits for the industry such as:

- Cryomation offers a greener funeral alternative to traditional burial and cremation
- Cryomation adds potential income streams to the funeral industry without affecting existing income streams
- Cryomation units' initial capital costs are similar to modern cremator costs with mercury filters
- Cryomation units have a 30 year life expectancy, and do not need expensive refits every five years
- Cryomation remains require significant less land for burial.

For more information visit www.cryomation.co.uk

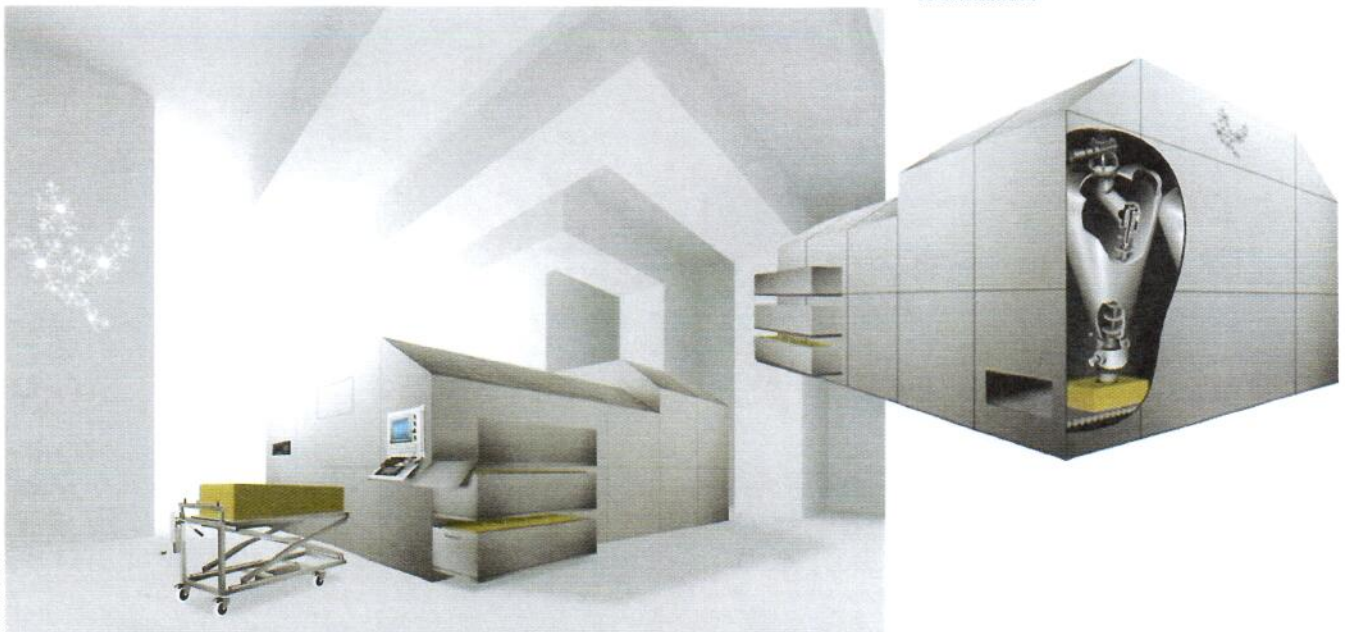
ALKALINE HYDROLYSIS

Alkaline Hydrolysis is a process which disposes of human remains by using an alkaline based treatment within a specialist machine. The method produces less harmful carbon dioxide and pollution than standard cremation but is yet to be a patented method of disposal.

Alkaline Hydrolysis involves loading a body into either a metal box which is taken out of a coffin at the entrance or being placed within a metal casing inside the machine. The machine is marketed as fully automated with the body being covered by a mixture of high pH solution. The weight of the body is important to this process as it can drastically affect the chemical reaction that covers the body.

Once only the bones are left they are then washed, taken out and then formed into a fine white powder. This process can take anywhere between eight to twelve hours which is longer than a standard fire cremation, however the pollution levels are marketed to be much lower.

This process has been created to mimic natural decomposition by companies advertising themselves as an alternative to cremation.



Photos: IRTL

CRYONIC PRESERVATION

Although considered an idea of science fiction, Cryonics is a method of cooling a person immediately after they are pronounced dead. The hope is that in some distant future, new technology will be able to restore the dead back to life.

Whilst this process exists, the re-animation of the dead is not yet possible even with the advancements in cloning and stem-cell research. Facilities in the USA carry out the procedure and because of dedicated UK groups, a body can be preliminarily prepared here and then shipped to the US for the full procedure.

As of 2013, approximately 270 people have been put through the entire process of Cryonic preservation and are stored within specially designed liquid nitrogen tanks at -196° since cryonics was first proposed in 1962.

Contrary to popular belief, Walt Disney did not go through this process and was instead cremated. This famous tale meant that Cryonics is well heard of throughout the world. However, Theodore Samuel 'Ted' Williams who was an American major league baseball player was in fact frozen cryogenically against his personal wishes.

MUMMIFICATION

This is not a tale of mummies from Egypt but in fact mummified bodies in the USA. Summum, a religious group based in America offers a modern mummification process which they believe is the "only form of permanent preservation". Although not available in the UK, Summum does accept bodies shipped from the UK and only asks for a donation of around £45,000 as well as the cost of sending the loved one to the States and back.

Some reports suggest people were mummified by Summum, however the majority of mummifications have been carried out on deceased pets at the request of their owners.

For more information visit www.summum.org/mummification

MEMORIAL REEFS

There are two companies within the US which specialize in Memorial reefs: Eternal Reefs and Neptune Reefs.

Eternal Reefs was created by divers from the University of Georgia led by Don Brawley and Todd Barber. An Eternal Reef is a man-made reef in which families can give their deceased back to the ocean and also

help to create a good environment for sealife.

The casting of the reef is performed near the designated reef site and a plaque including a personally designed inscription is fixed to the reef. At the casting session family and loved ones have the opportunity to be as involved as they desire, mixing the remains of a loved one into the concrete to create a 'Pearl' centre piece that fits inside the reef ball. Many families then personalize the top with hand prints and then they are cast into a designated spot within the ocean to help the environment.

Organisers say the burials help to preserve aquatic animals when so much of their natural fish habitats have been destroyed. Although an American service, ashes from the UK can be used if transported via the proper methods.

For more information visit www.eternalreefs.com



Photos: Eternal Reefs