

“I had daydreamed about it for years but I never thought I was the type of person to leave my job and set up a business.”

JOSEPH O’NEILL

Eternum Columbarium



It's not often that one daydreams about creating burial spaces, but Joseph O'Neill says plans for his unique business were ruminating in his mind for 10 years.

The idea was initially sparked in 2009 when a church in Belfast converted a crawl space under its floor to bury urns.

“Then, in 2012, a priest I knew had a columbarium (a structure to hold cremated remains in urns) installed at his church when it was undergoing renovations. I started to become interested in the idea of creating a respectful, pleasant space where urns could be stored and families could visit the remains of their loved ones. I knew that burial space was running out but also that more and more people were choosing to be cremated,” says Joseph.

However, Joseph had no experience in the industry so the idea remained in the background. After studying drama and realising he didn't want to become a teacher and would never become an actor, he did a Master's in Communication, Advertising and PR.

He worked in marketing for Trócaire in his

native Belfast for five years before moving to London in 2016 to work at a maritime charity. Two years later, he moved to Berlin as his partner got a job there and continued to work for the same charity.

“The idea for the business was in my head for so long that I knew I had to do something about it or regret it for the rest of my life. I had daydreamed about it for years but I never thought I was the type of person to leave my job and set up a business.”

Yet, that is what he did. A prominent businessman in Belfast told him he had to turn his idea into a reality, giving him the courage to take the leap of faith. And so Eternum Columbarium – which plans, installs and fully manages columbaria – was born.

Joseph gave up his job in May 2019 to work on the business full-time and returned to Ireland in February 2020 when he joined Back for Business with Áine Denn as his Lead Entrepreneur.

“Áine is incredible and has such amazing insight and ideas. What I loved about

Back for Business was that I thought I was on my own but everyone I met was in the same boat. I would credit Back for Business with landing me my first deal as the accountability and the goal setting of the programme kept me focussed and determined.”

Joseph signed his first contract with the Cathedral of Saints Peter & Paul in Ennis at the start of 2021 and the columbarium there will open at the start of April.

“What makes my service unique is that columbaria are sometimes put into churches as an afterthought but the service offered by Eternum is well-thought out, well planned and offers a beautiful solution to the burial space crisis in Ireland. Columbaria don't necessarily have to be religious and I am in talks with some tourist attractions. The ex-pat community who want to be buried at home will be a major market for me.”

Joseph is currently in talks with churches, communities and tourist attractions in counties Limerick, Galway, Dublin, Antrim, Donegal and Derry and plans to hire his first employee in 2021.

POSITION

Founder and Managing Director

WHAT WE DO

We design, install and manage beautiful resting places for cremated remains.

CONTACT US

M: +353 85 2148301

E: joseph@eternumcolumbarium.com

W: www.eternumcolumbarium.com