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(71) Applicants:
- **Maggini, Gianluca**
  50013 Campi Bisenzio (Firenze) (IT)
- **Ranucci, Stefano**
  50145 Firenze (IT)
- **Reale, Andrea**
  50031 Campi Bisenzio (Firenze) (IT)

(72) Inventors:
- **Maggini, Gianluca**
  50013 Campi Bisenzio (Firenze) (IT)
- **Ranucci, Stefano**
  50145 Firenze (IT)
- **Reale, Andrea**
  50031 Campi Bisenzio (Firenze) (IT)

(74) Representative: **Bardini, Marco Luigi et al**
Società Italiana Brevetti SpA
Corso dei Tintori, 25
50122 Firenze (IT)

(54) **A plastic tombstone**

(57) A tombstone that comprises a box-shaped body (1, 2) made of plastic and open on one side (5), a central seat (8) defined inside said box-shaped body (1, 2) from said open side (5) and adapted to slidingly receive a support member (12) to be driven into the ground, wherein means for stably connecting said box-shaped body (1, 2) to said support member (12) are also provided.

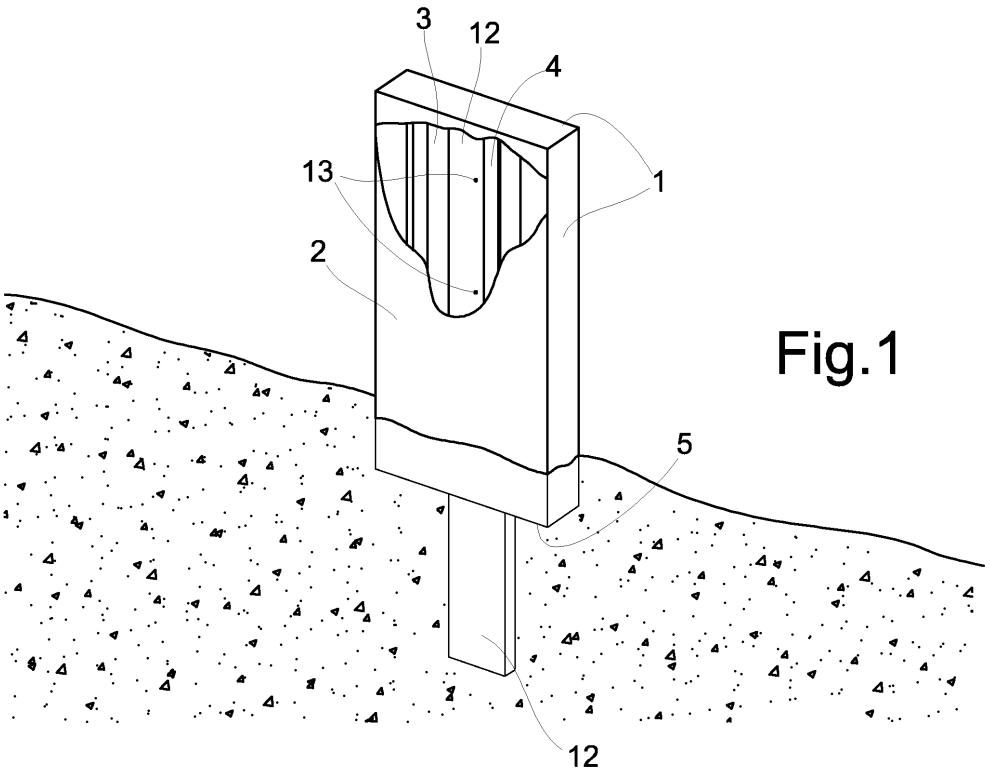

Fig.1

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Description

[0001] The present invention refers to the field of funeral and cemetery items in general, and in particular it concerns a new type of tombstone.

[0002] As known, when a corpse is buried under the ground, before placing tombstones made of marble, stone or similar material on the tilled soil, the soil must first be left to settle. Generally, such an operation takes about one year during which, in order to allow the relatives of the deceased to commemorate the corpse in any case, a wooden element representing a religious symbol like for example a cross is driven into the ground.

[0003] In general, such a cross, indeed for the temporary nature of its function, has a rough finishing, not very aesthetically pleasing which further worsens during the period of use due to the bad weather it is subjected to.

[0004] Since the relatives of the deceased people are usually particularly concerned with the aspect with which the grave is presented, it is clear that the use of these crosses or the like can cause discontent and discomfort.

[0005] In addition to this problem, transitory in any case due to the relatively short period of use of the crosses, one should also consider the cost of permanent tombstones. Indeed, these tombstones, generally made of high quality material, have quite high costs that can be prohibitive for the less wealthy classes of the population.

[0006] The present invention proposes to solve these problems by providing a tombstone which is advantageously cost-effective and that can be used as a replacement of the temporary wooden elements or as a replacement of known types of tombstones.

[0007] According to the present invention these and other objects are achieved with a tombstone **characterized in that** it comprises a box-shaped body made of plastic material and open on one side in which a housing is formed, said housing being adapted to slidably house a support member to be driven into the ground. Means for stably connecting the box-shaped body to the support member are also provided.

[0008] The invention shall now be illustrated in greater detail with the following description of one of its embodiments, given as an example and not for limiting purposes with reference to the attached drawings wherein:

- figure 1 is an overall schematic view of the tombstone according to the invention in the configuration of use;
- figure 2 is a horizontal sectional view of the tombstone of figure 1; and
- figure 3 is a broken front view of the tombstone of figure 1.

[0009] With reference to said figures, a tombstone according to the invention is substantially box shaped and comprises a concave body 1 and a closing panel 2 both preferably made of a recyclable plastic material, like for example polystyrene (PS) or polyethylene terephthalate (PET), or, even more preferably, recycled heterogeneous post-consumption plastic from urban waste separation.

[0010] The concave body 1 (see figures 2 and 3), in the example has a substantially rectangular-shaped bottom 1a and has an open short side 5 corresponding to the side of the tombstone intended to be driven into the ground. On the bottom of the body 1, in a parallel fashion with the two longer sides closed by respective walls, two reinforcement ribs 3 and 4 are fixed, through cold glueing, mutually parallel and spaced apart. The ribs rise from the bottom up to being substantially flush with the upper edge of the concave body 1.

[0011] As shown in figure 2, such ribs are beams with a substantially Z-shaped cross section, also made of recyclable material, arranged so as to divide the inside of the concave body 1 into three sections, a central section and two side sections. In particular the flaps of the ribs 3, 4 resting on the bottom of the body 1 face towards the central section whereas the remaining flaps face towards the side walls. At the central section, along an axis parallel to the ribs 3 and 4 and at the centre of such a section, a plurality of holes 11 is formed in the bottom 1a, for example in number of three, equally spaced apart from one another and having the same diameter. Along the three closed sides of the body 1, a flange 6 projects outwards, on which a peripheral groove 7 is formed.

[0012] As far as the closing panel 2 is now concerned, this has a rectangular shape with slightly greater size than the bottom 1a of the body 1, and is arranged so as to close the same body and to cover the ribs arranged therein. More precisely, with reference to figure 2, the panel is positioned so that its periphery is held by the groove 7 and so that the upper flaps of the ribs 3 and 4 abut against the same panel.

[0013] The panel 2 is fixed to the body 1 and to the upper flaps of the ribs 3 and 4 through cold gluing.

[0014] A box-shaped assembly given by the stable engagement between the concave body 1 and the closing panel 2 that covers the same body 1 is thus defined. The reinforcement ribs 3 and 4, as well as consolidating the box-shaped structure preventing the panel inside the concave body from possibly collapsing, define, corresponding to the above mentioned sections, three seats, a central seat 8 and two side seats 9 and 10 having a substantially quadrangular section, for example rectangular.

[0015] As shown in figure 1, the tombstone according to the invention is driven into the ground to a minimum depth from the already mentioned side 5 and is stably kept in a substantially vertical position through a support member 12 fully driven into the ground.

[0016] In further detail, the support member 12 has preferably a cross section of the same shape as the seat 8 (rectangular in the embodiment described here) and a size such as to be adapted to engage within such a seat.

[0017] Once the support member 12 has been driven, the tombstone is arranged on the latter. More precisely the central seat 8, at the open short side 5, is made to

slide on the support member up to the desired position. Once this has been reached, the tombstone is stably connected to the support member through a set of locking means such as pins, screws or similar elements that are inserted into the holes 11 gripping into the support 12.

[0018] The support 12 can be made of any known type of material like for example wood, cement, marble or similar. Depending on the material forming the support, openings 13 can possibly be made, like in the example. The openings 13 can be threaded or through holes, corresponding to the plurality of holes formed in the concave body 1 both in terms of size and of space between one opening and the other. In such a case the tombstone is arranged on the support so that the openings 13 of the support member 12 are perfectly aligned with the plurality of holes 11 of the body 1 so as to be able to lock the tombstone to the support member through the aforementioned locking means.

[0019] A tombstone according to the invention can be used in cemeteries of any religious belief since its particular shape does not refer to any sacred symbol.

[0020] However, a tombstone according to the invention, thanks to the material of which it is formed, can easily be personalised through known printing techniques. Indeed, due to its particular structure it is possible, during the production step, to either make panels on which there is the image of the deceased and/or religious symbols or affix some plasticised adhesive images depicting any desired representation on the already assembled tombstone.

[0021] Moreover, the material forming the tombstones according to the invention, has a particular resistance both to low and to high temperatures (these materials typically resist temperatures that range from -20 to 70 degrees centigrade) and therefore the tombstones can easily withstand the temperature changes that usually occur over one solar year. Indeed, due to this precise characteristic, tombstones according to the invention last an unlimited amount of time.

[0022] It should be clear from what has been outlined that the tombstone according to the invention, due to the great customizing possibility and to its longevity, makes it possible to obtain cemetery items that are much more dignified than current wooden crosses for temporary use and that can possibly also be used instead of permanent tombstones.

[0023] Due to the constructive simplicity, the tombstones according to the invention indeed have a much lower cost with respect to those made of marble or stone, and therefore families with financial difficulties could use tombstones according to the invention not only for the period in which the soil is settling, but also for the following time.

[0024] A further advantage given by the use of tombstones according to the invention is due to the composition of the material with which these are made. The use of recyclable material indeed, not only allows its subsequent re-use for the production of new tombstones, a thing which is not possible with wooden crosses, but also makes it possible to reduce environmental impact that the use of wooden crosses or marble and/or stone tombstones entails.

[0025] Even if in the present description reference has been made to a tombstone formed by a substantially concave body on which reinforcement ribs are fixed, and by a covering panel, it should be clear that the invention can also be embodied with a different number of elements in any case ensuring the same functionality. For example, a tombstone according to the invention can be formed through an extrusion process, in this way a monolithic tombstone assembly with the same properties and characteristics as the one described, can be obtained.

[0026] Moreover, in the example illustrated in the figures, a box-shaped tombstone with a substantially rectangular-shaped profile has been considered, but it is clear that the tombstone can be made in any desired shape as long as there are always the functional elements here described. Just like the shape, also the size of the tombstone can vary without producing any functional change on the invention.

[0027] The same applies for the type of reinforcement ribs, which can be of any shape and size as long as it is ensured that there is always a central seat with which the tombstone can be fit on to the support member.

[0028] Even the number and size of the seats, in particular those in which a plurality of holes is not formed, can vary based upon the shape of the concave body and to the relative arrangement of the ribs inside it.

[0029] The present invention has been described thus far with reference to a preferred embodiment. It should be clear that there can be other embodiments that refer to the same inventive concept, as defined by the scope of protection of the claims shown here.

Claims

1. A tombstone **characterised in that** it comprises a box-shaped body (1, 2) made of plastic and open on one side (5), a central seat (8) defined inside said box-shaped body (1, 2) from said open side (5) and adapted to slidingly receive a support member (12) to be driven into the ground, wherein means for stably connecting said box-shaped body (1, 2) to said support member (12) are also provided.

2. The tombstone according to claim 1, wherein at least two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) are provided within said box-shaped body (1, 2), said at least two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) being stably fastened to said body (1, 2) and defining said central seat (8) between them.

3. The tombstone according to any of the previous claims, wherein said means for connecting said box-shaped body (1, 2) to said support member (12) com-

prise a plurality of holes (11) formed in said box-shaped body (1, 2) at said central seat (8), wherein locking means adapted to fasten said box-shaped body (1, 2) to said support member (12) are also provided.

4. The tombstone according to claim 3, wherein said support member (12) comprises openings (13) corresponding to said plurality of holes (11), said openings (13) and said plurality of holes (11) being adapted to receive said locking means.

5. The tombstone according to any of the previous claims, wherein said box-shaped body (1, 2) is made of a recycled or recyclable plastic material.

6. The tombstone according to any of the previous claims, wherein said box-shaped body (1,2) comprises a concave body (1) with a bottom (1a) and a closing panel (2) that closes said concave body (1) on the side opposite said bottom (1a).

7. The tombstone according to claim 6, wherein said concave body (1) comprises a flange (6) projecting outwards and a peripheral groove (7) formed on said flange (6) suitable for engaging with the edge of said closing panel (2).

8. The tombstone according to any of the claims 6 or 7, wherein said bottom (1a) is substantially rectangular-shaped and said two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) have Z-shaped cross sections with flaps abutting against said bottom (1a) and said closing panel (2), and arranged in a parallel fashion with two closed and opposite side walls of said concave body (1).

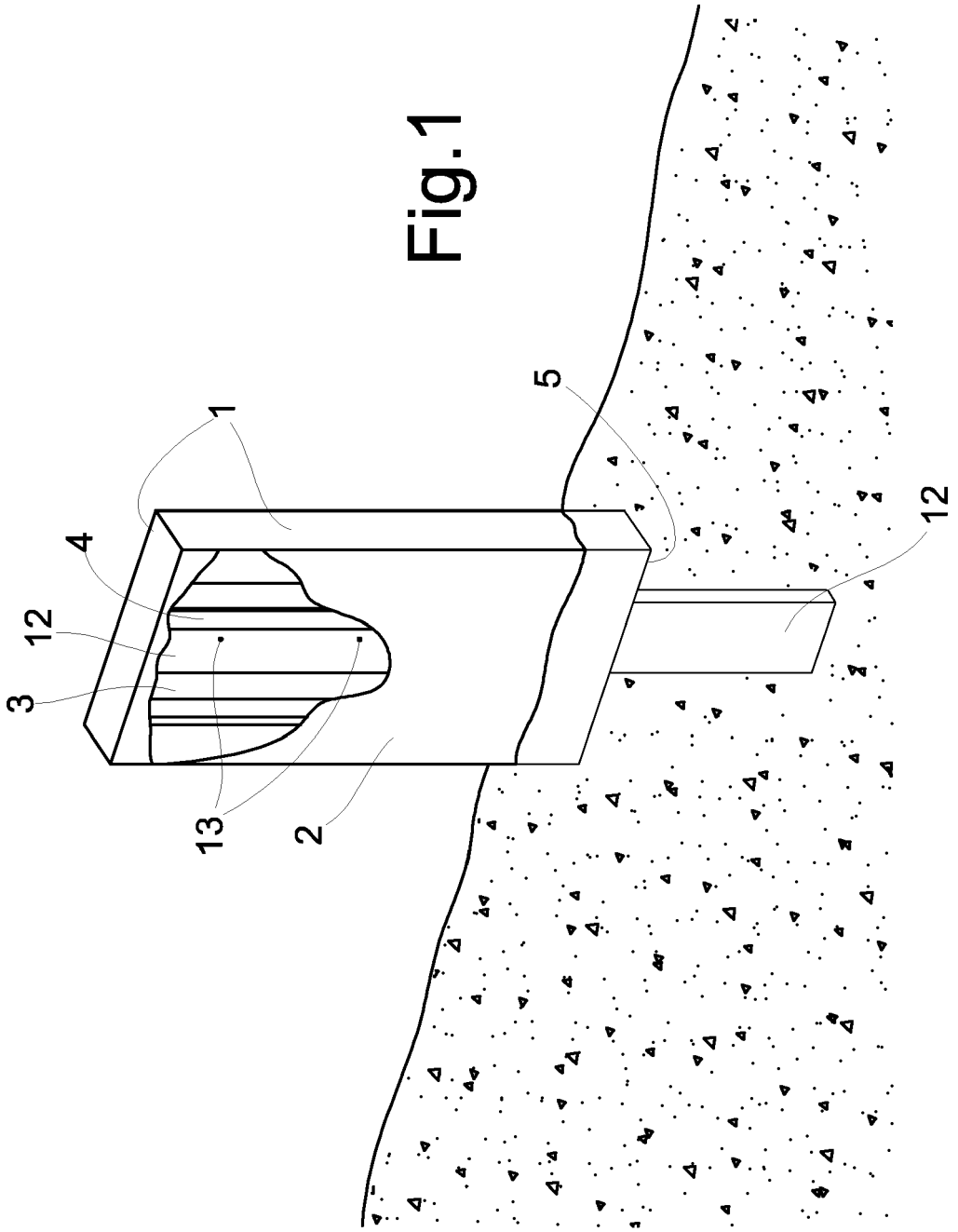
9. The tombstone according to any of the claims from 6 to 8, wherein the stable engagement between said concave body (1) and said panel (2) and said two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) is made through cold gluing means.

10. The tombstone according to any of the claims from 1 to 5, wherein said box-shaped body (1, 2) and said two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) are obtained by a single block of material through an extrusion process.

11. The tombstone according to any of the previous claims, wherein said box-shaped body (1, 2) and said two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) are made of polystyrene (PS).

12. The tombstone according to any of the claims from 1 to 10, wherein said box-shaped body (1, 2) and said two reinforcement ribs (3, 4) are made of polyethylene terephthalate (PET).

Fig.1



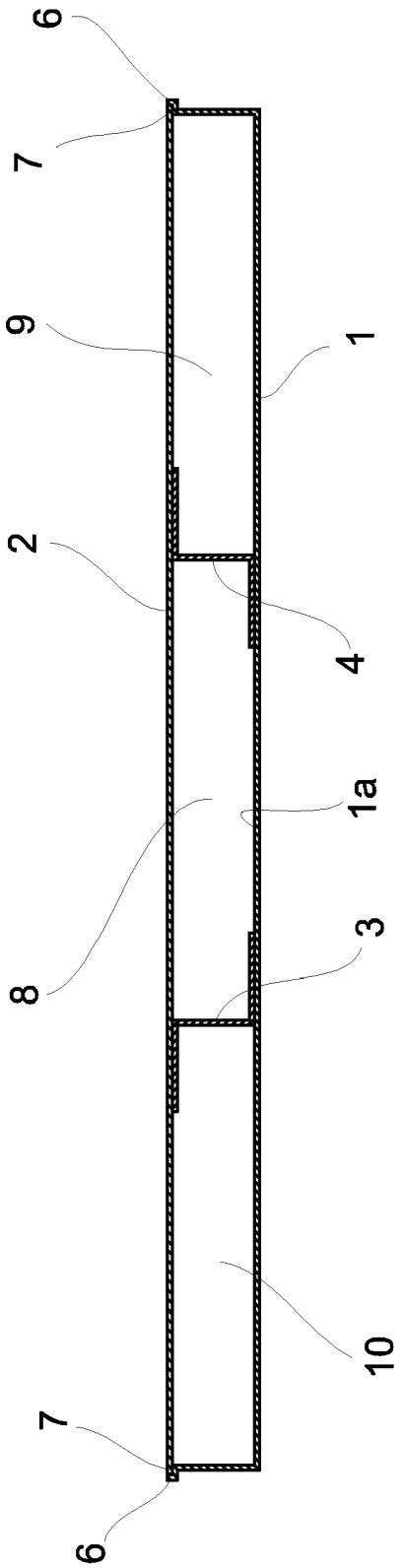


Fig.2

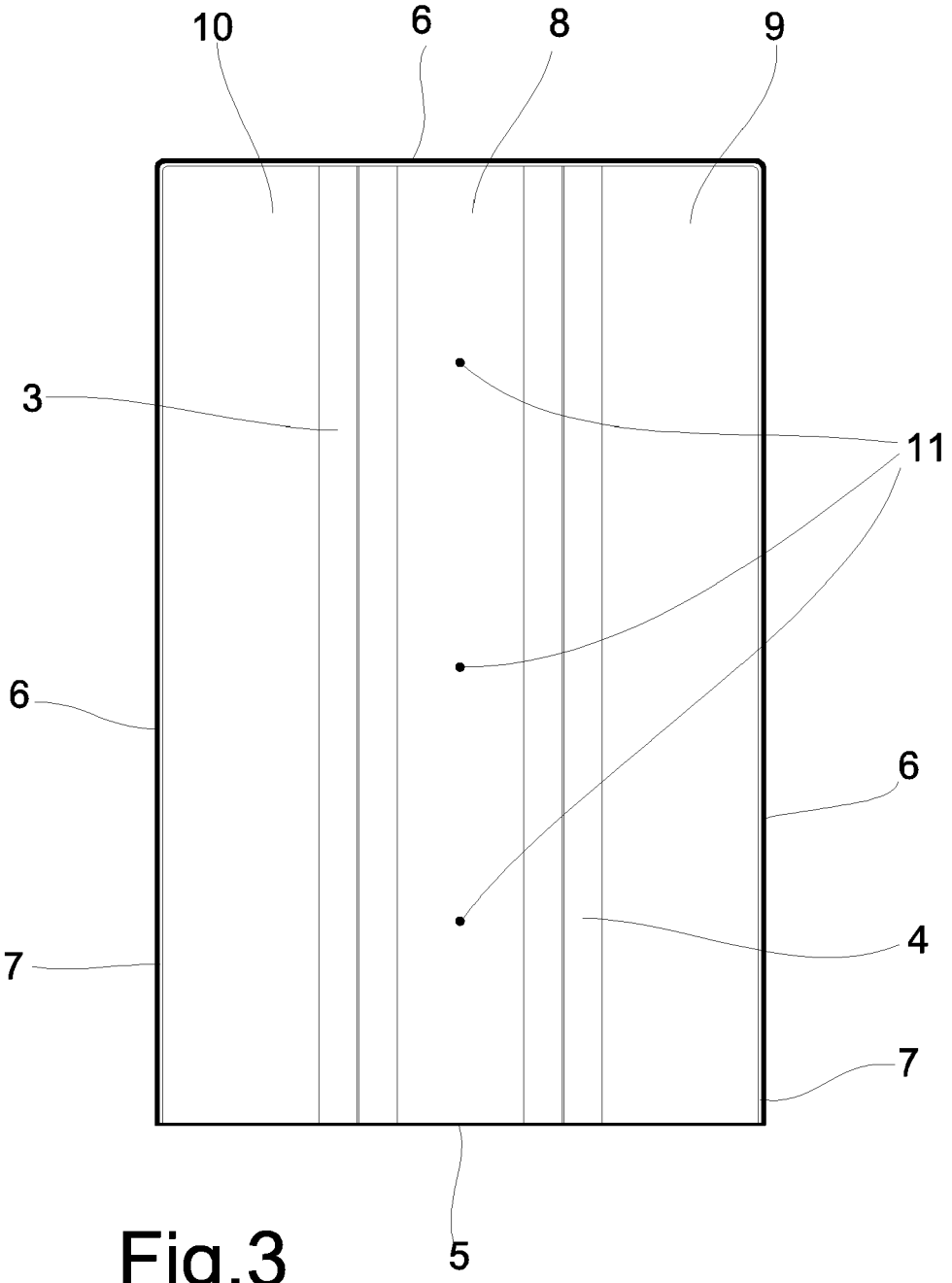


Fig.3