



US 20030071045A1

(19) **United States**

(12) **Patent Application Publication**
Taylor

(10) **Pub. No.: US 2003/0071045 A1**

(43) **Pub. Date: Apr. 17, 2003**

(54) **CONFIGURABLE CUP HOLDER**

Jun. 26, 2000 (GB)..... 0015518.4

(76) Inventor: **Clare Louise Taylor, London (GB)**

Publication Classification

Correspondence Address:
**SCHWEGMAN, LUNDBERG, WOESSNER &
KLUTH, P.A.**
P.O. BOX 2938
MINNEAPOLIS, MN 55402 (US)

(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **B65D 3/00; B65D 25/00**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **220/737; 229/403**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

(21) Appl. No.: **10/236,427**

A beverages holder, comprising a disposable cup (200) for containing the beverage and a carrier (100) for enabling a user to carry or support the cup, the holder being configurable in at least two of:

(22) Filed: **Sep. 6, 2002**

Related U.S. Application Data

a first configuration in which a portion (5,12) of the carrier (100) supports a base (201) of the cup;

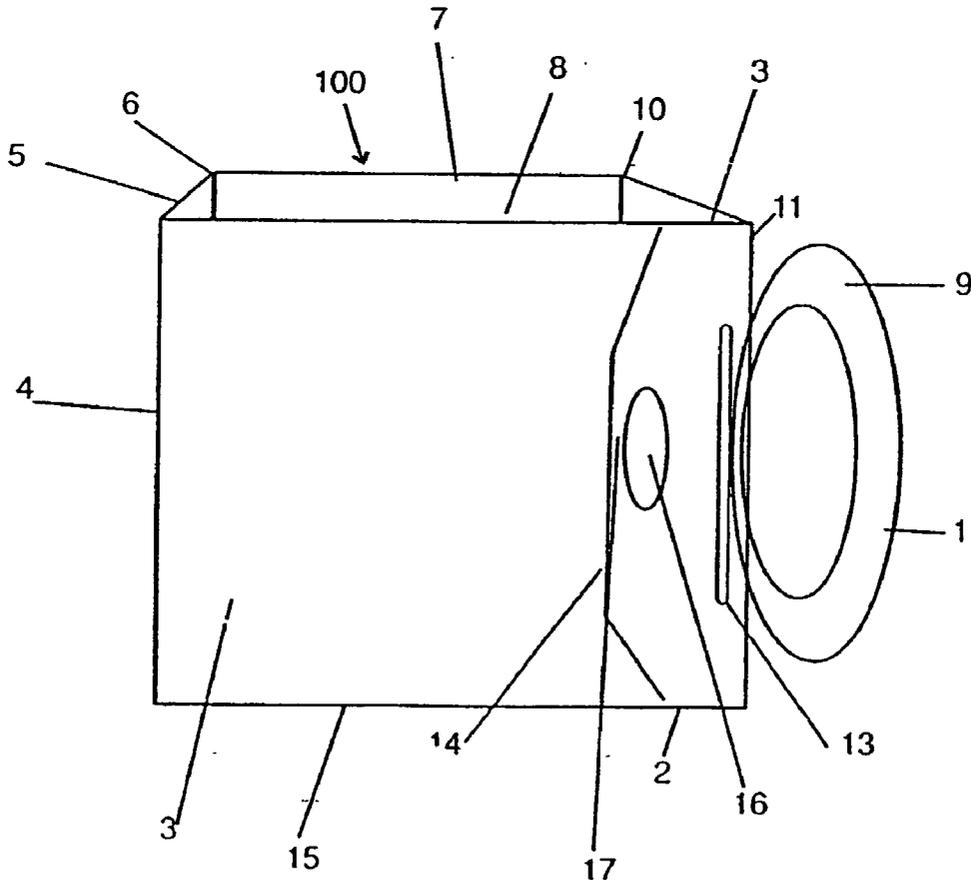
(63) Continuation of application No. PCT/GB01/00979, filed on Mar. 7, 2001.

a second configuration in which the cup (200) is suspended beneath part (5,12) of the carrier; and

(30) **Foreign Application Priority Data**

a third configuration in which the carrier (100) provides a band around the cup (200).

Mar. 7, 2000 (GB)..... 0005310.8



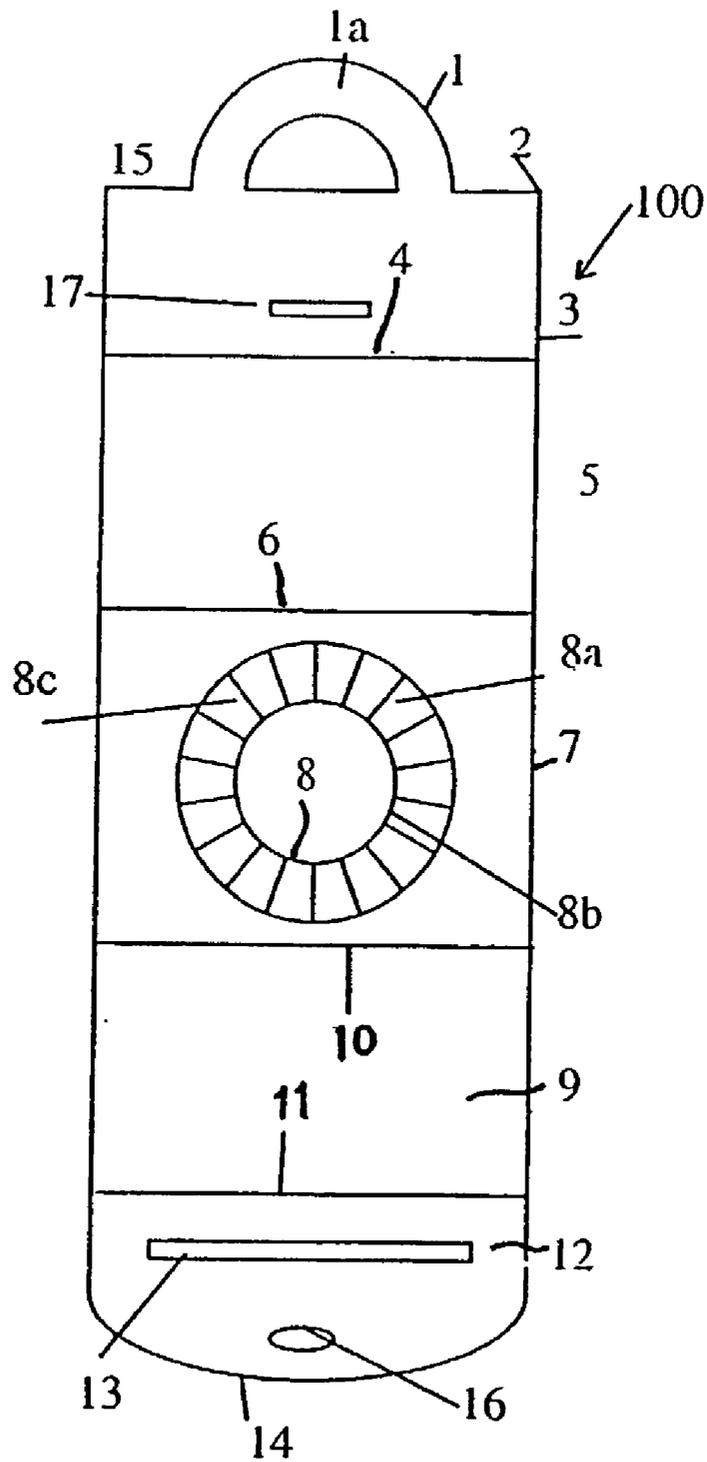


Fig 1.

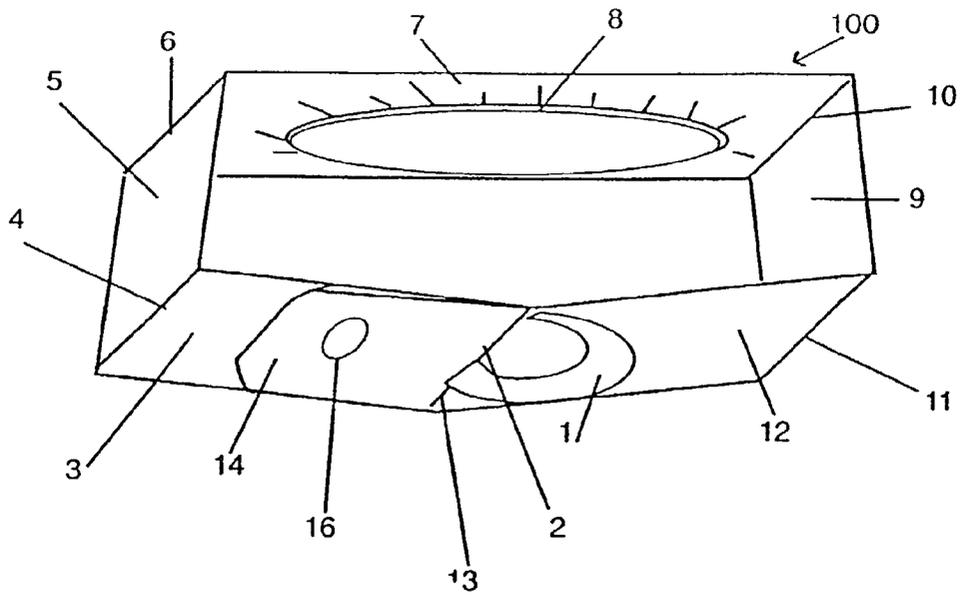


Fig 2

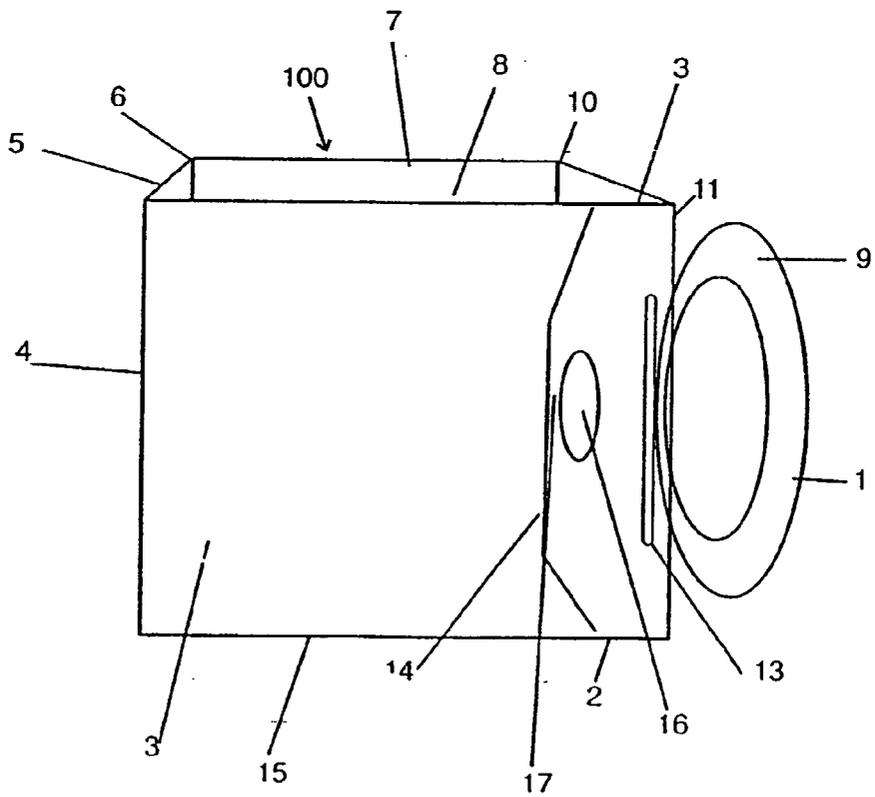
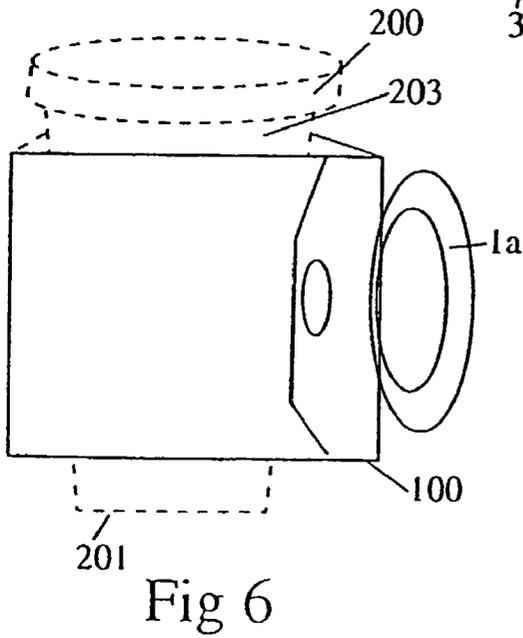
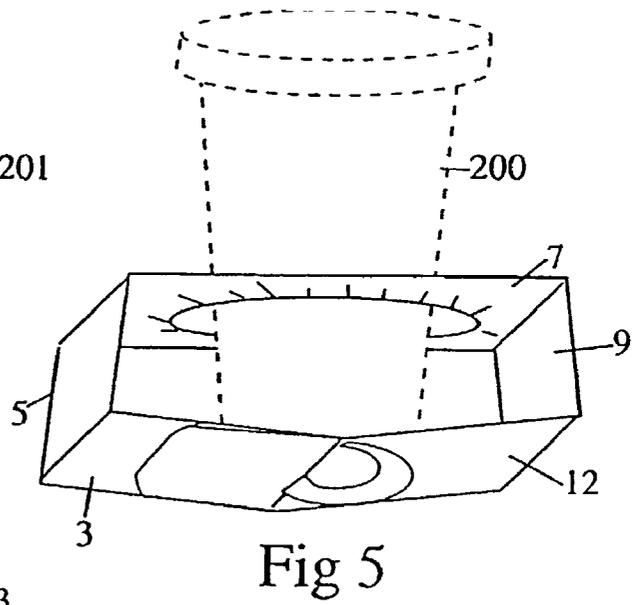
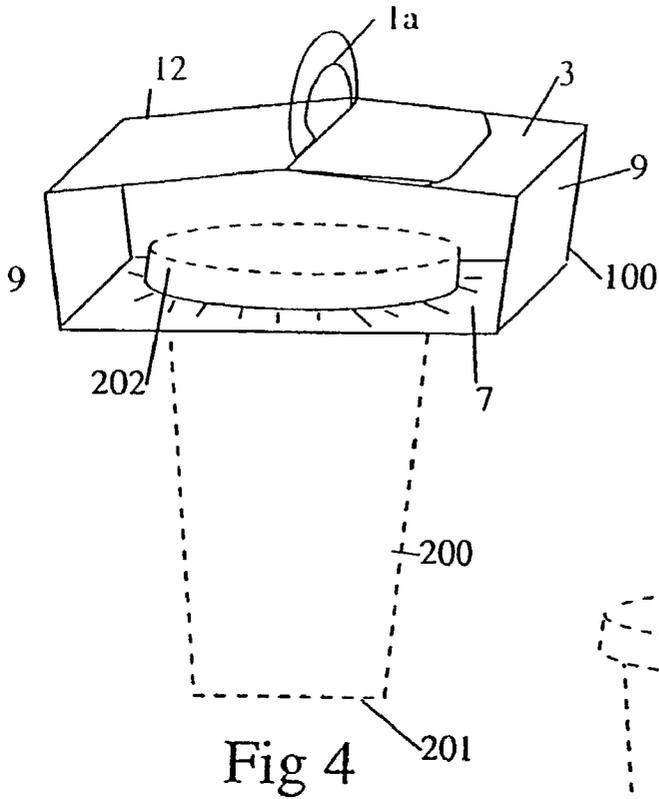


Fig 3



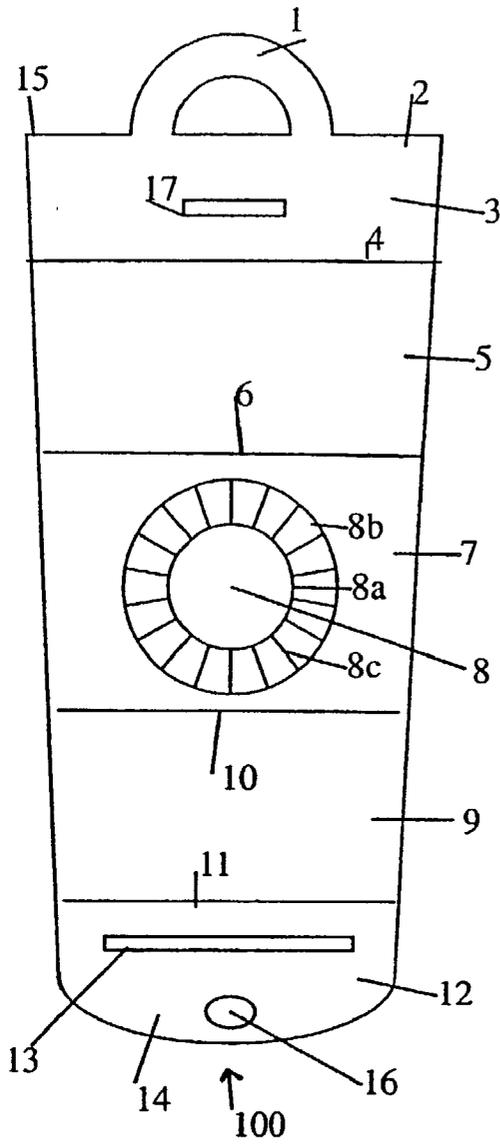


Fig 7

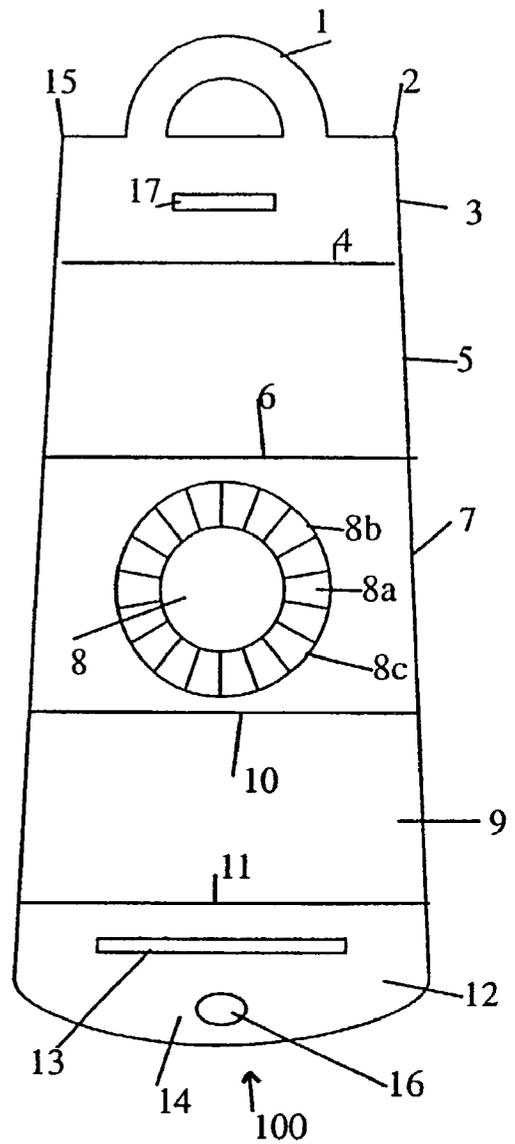
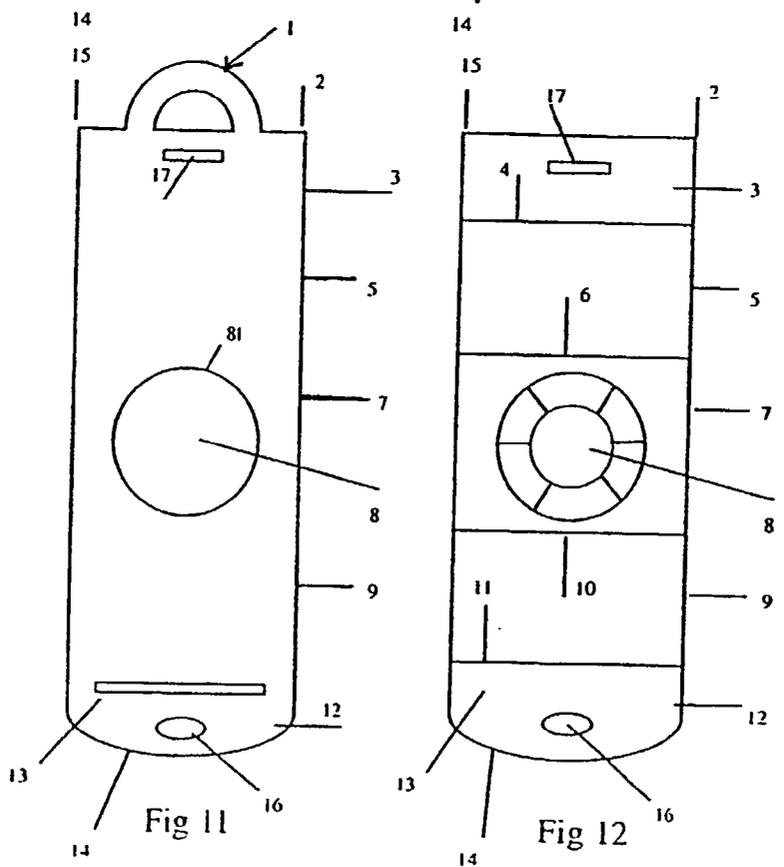
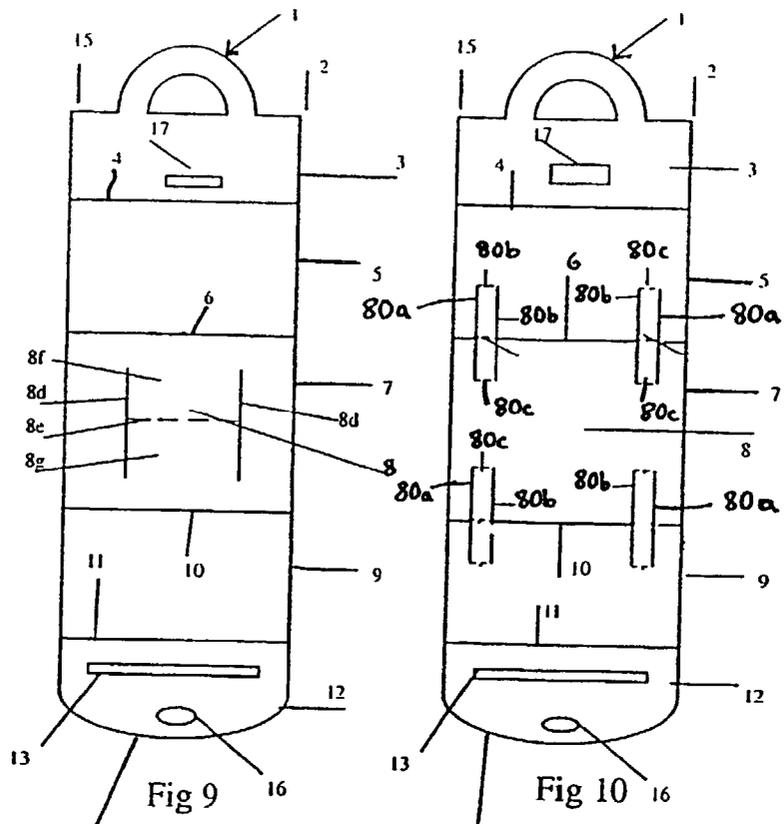
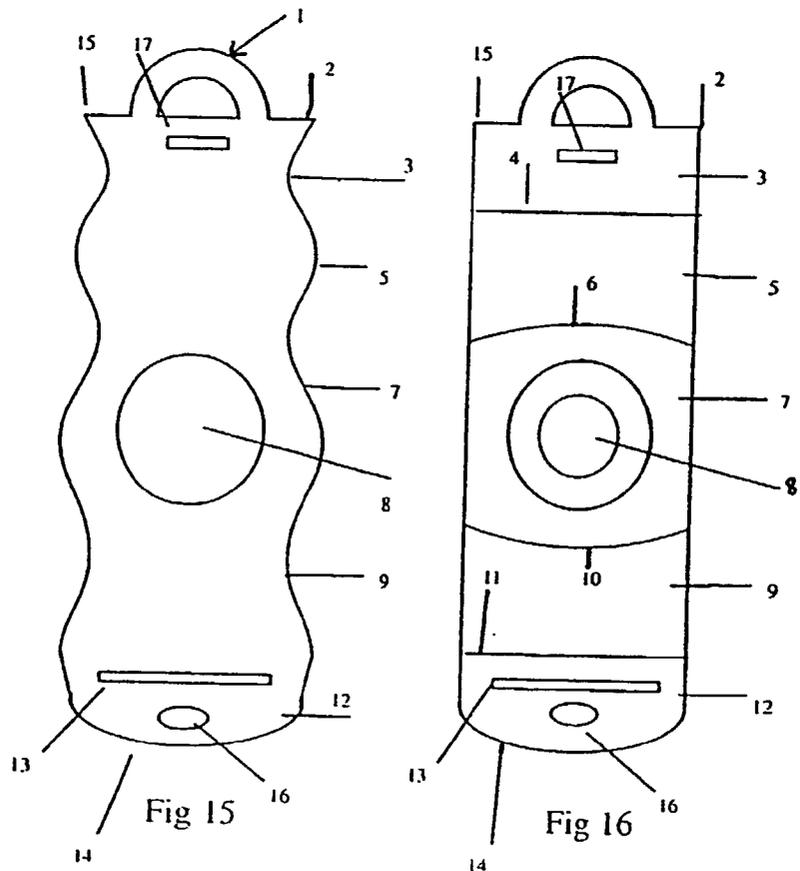
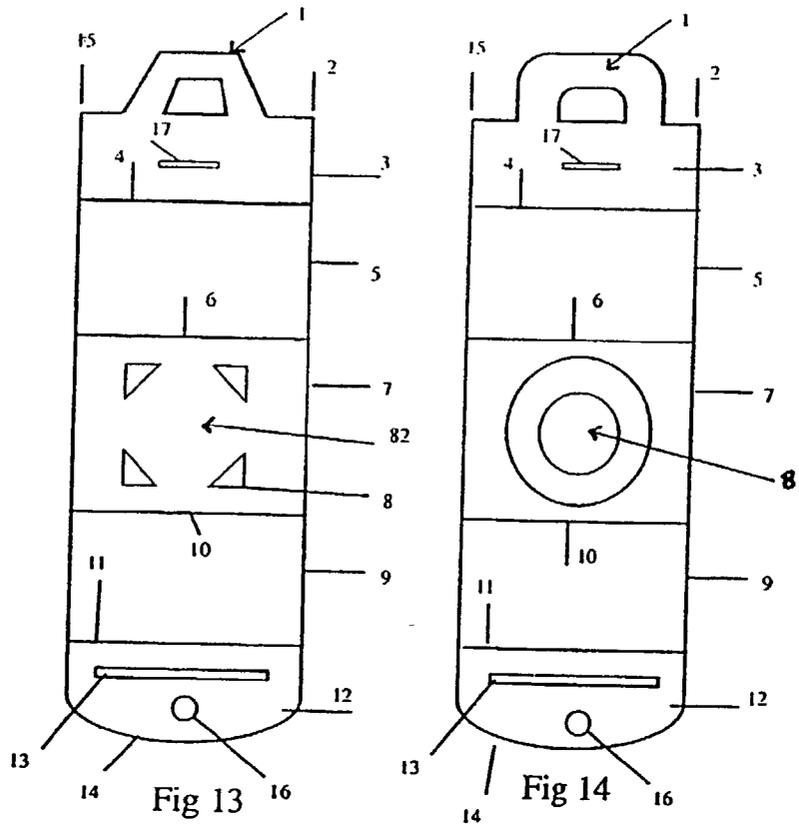


Fig 8





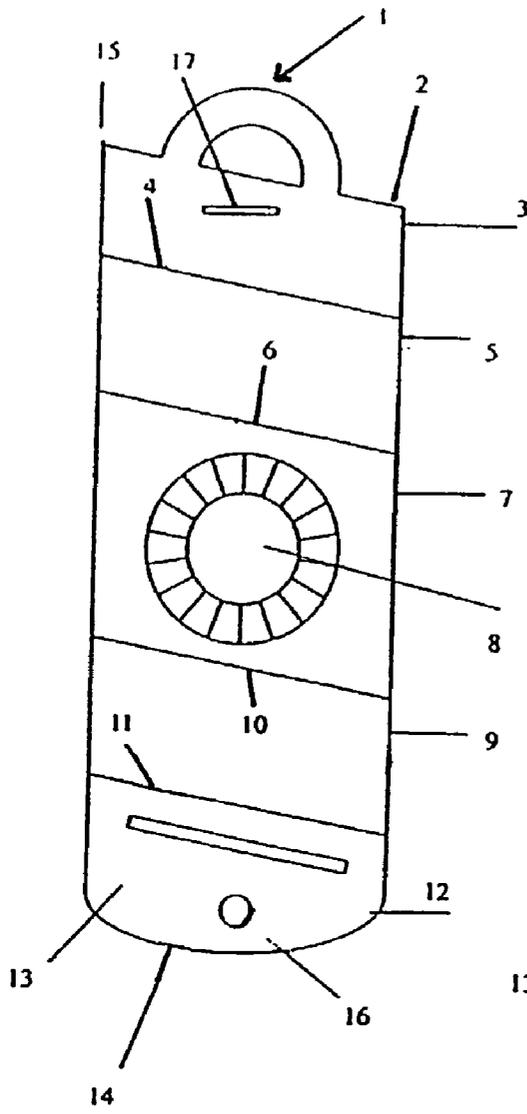


Fig 17

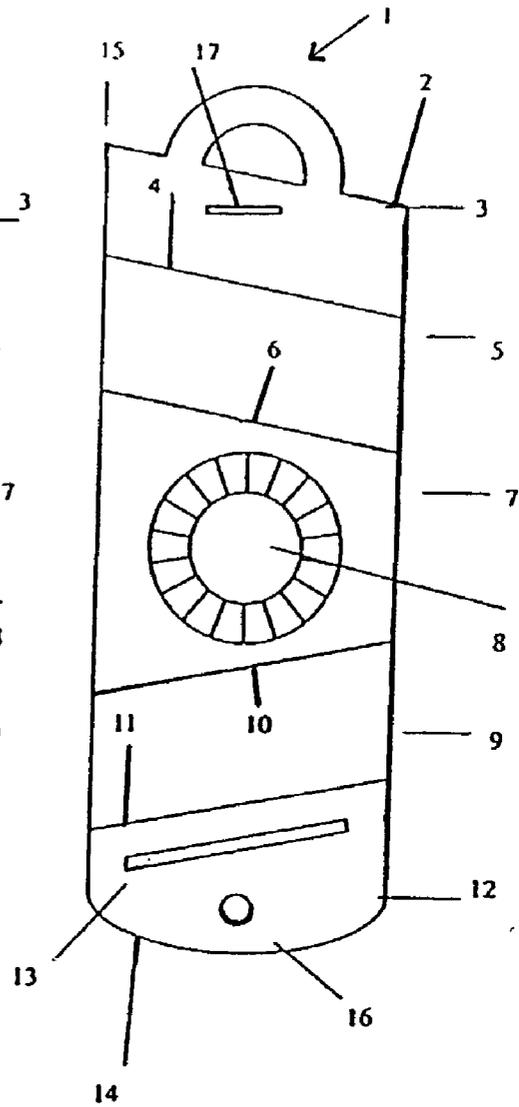


Fig 18

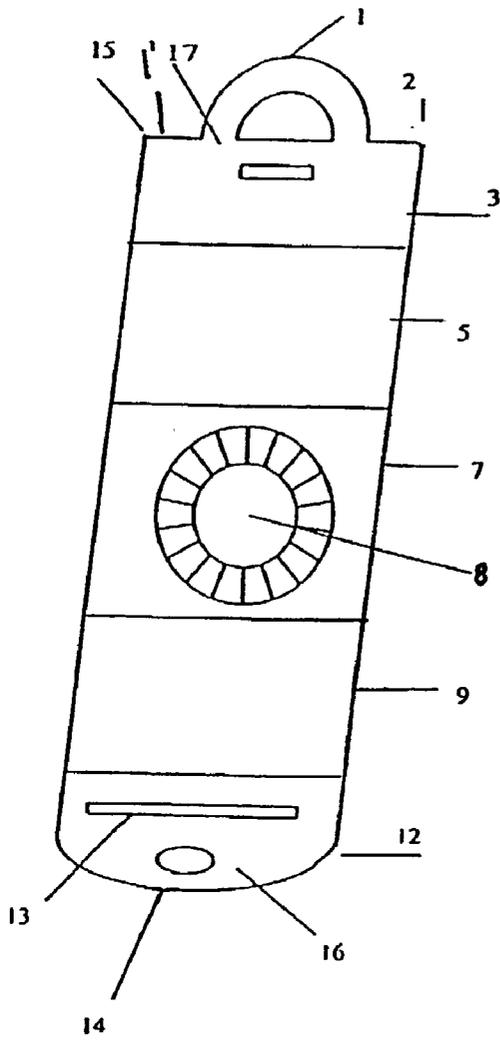


Fig 19

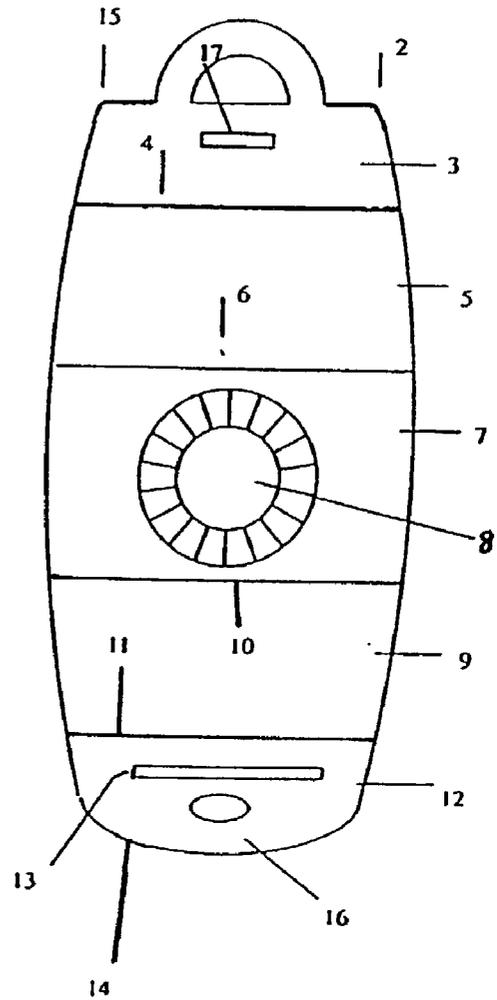
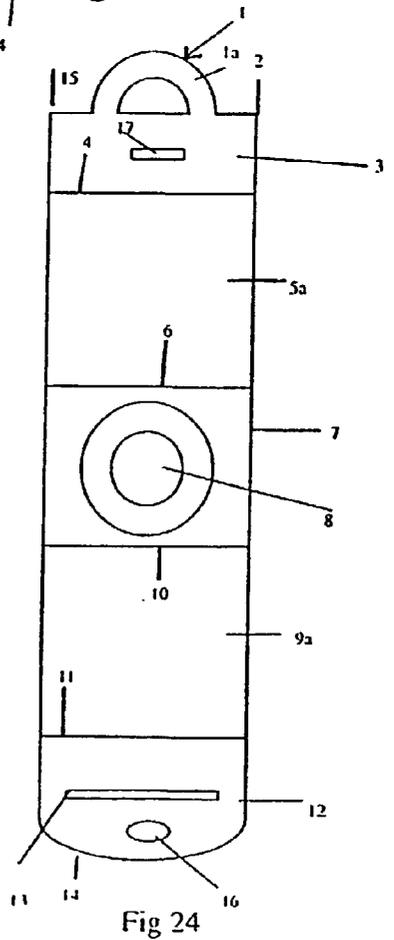
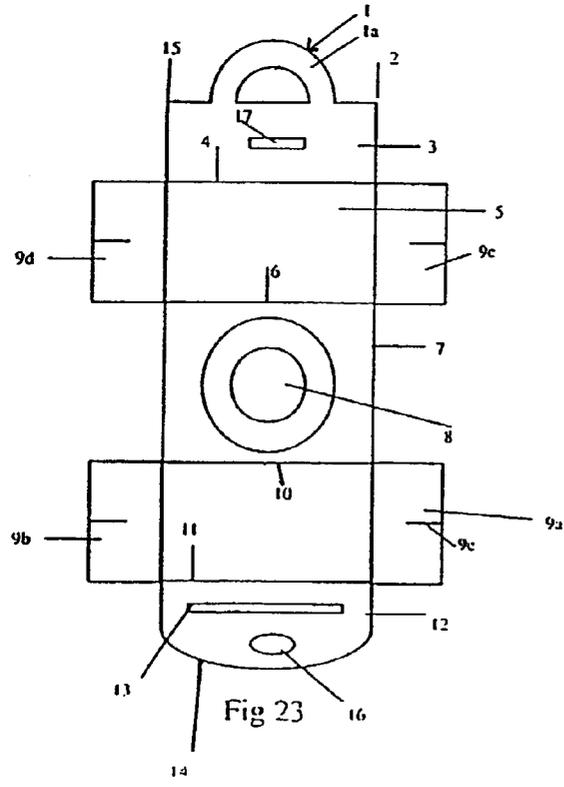
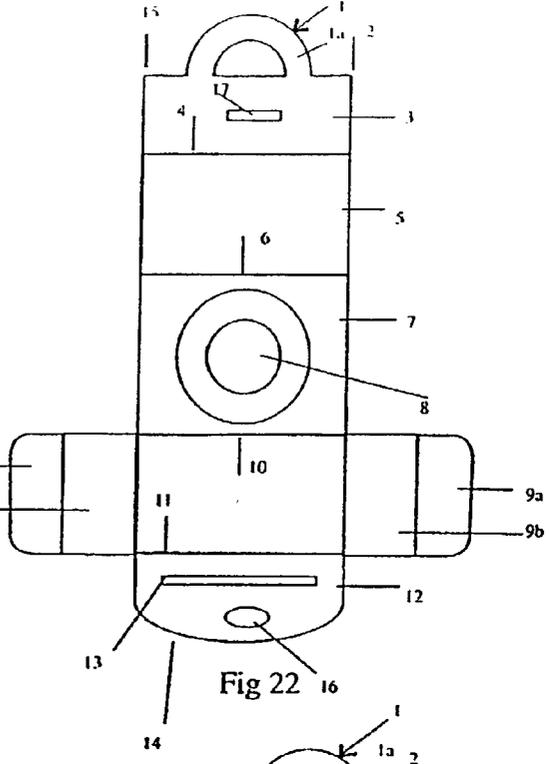
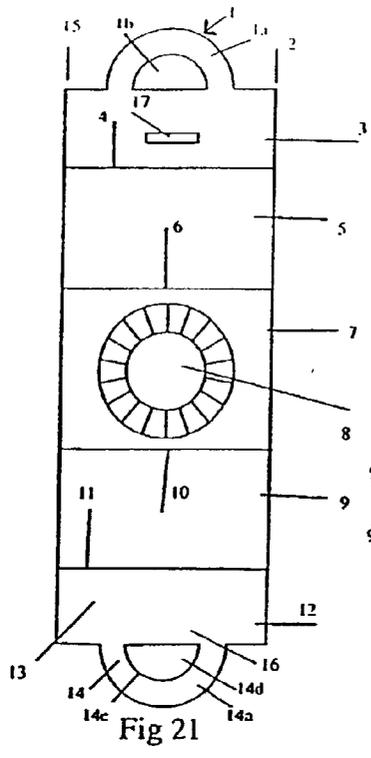


Fig 20



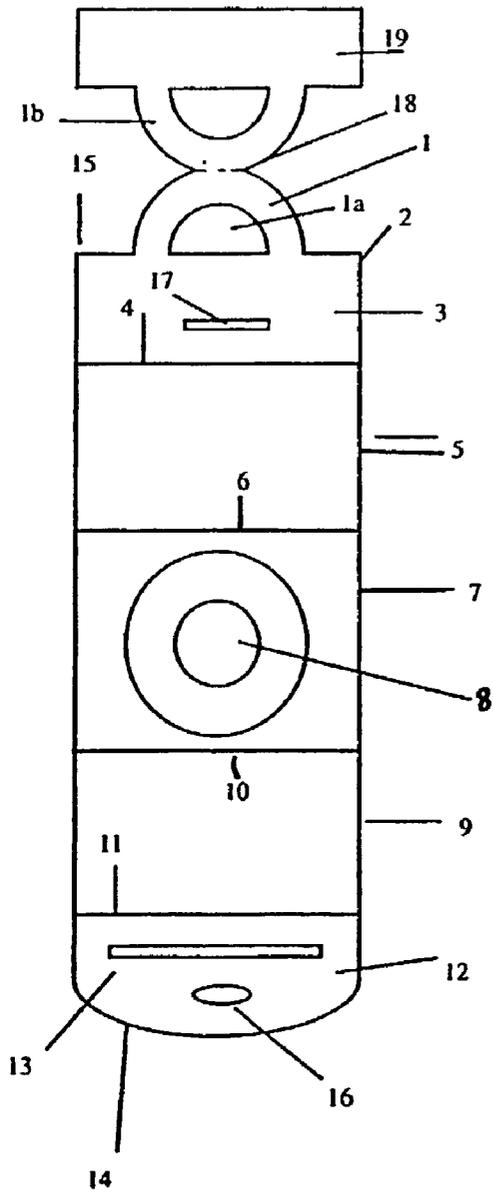


Fig 25

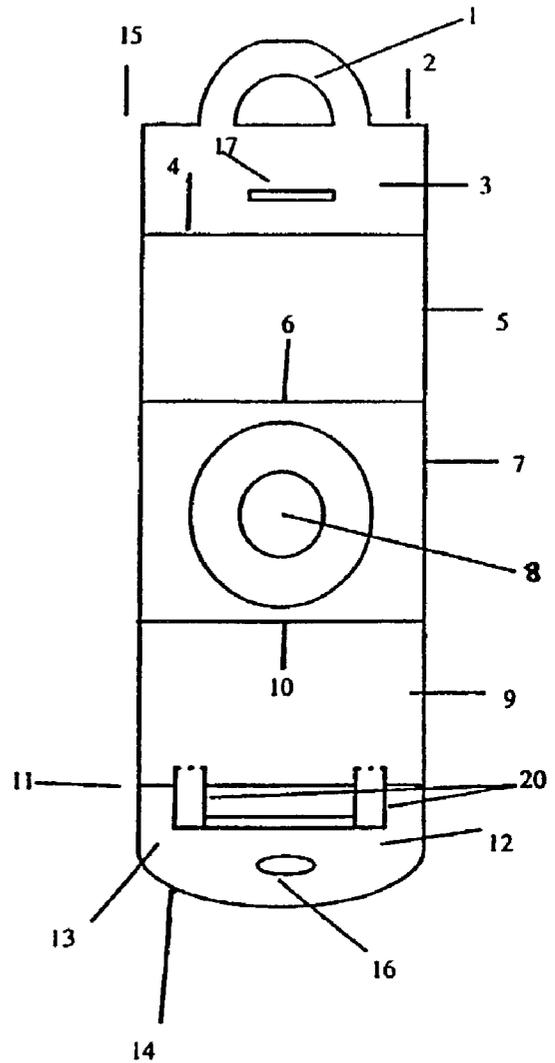


Fig 26

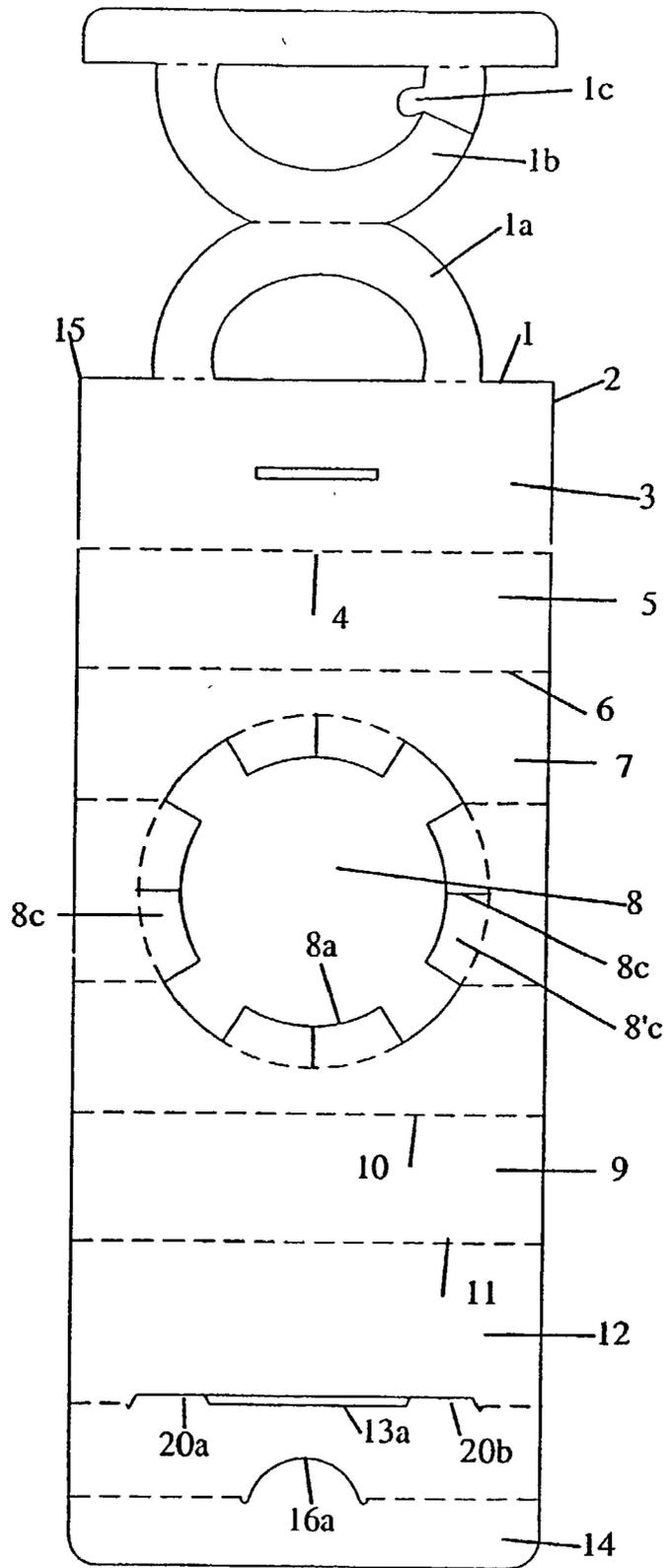


Fig 27

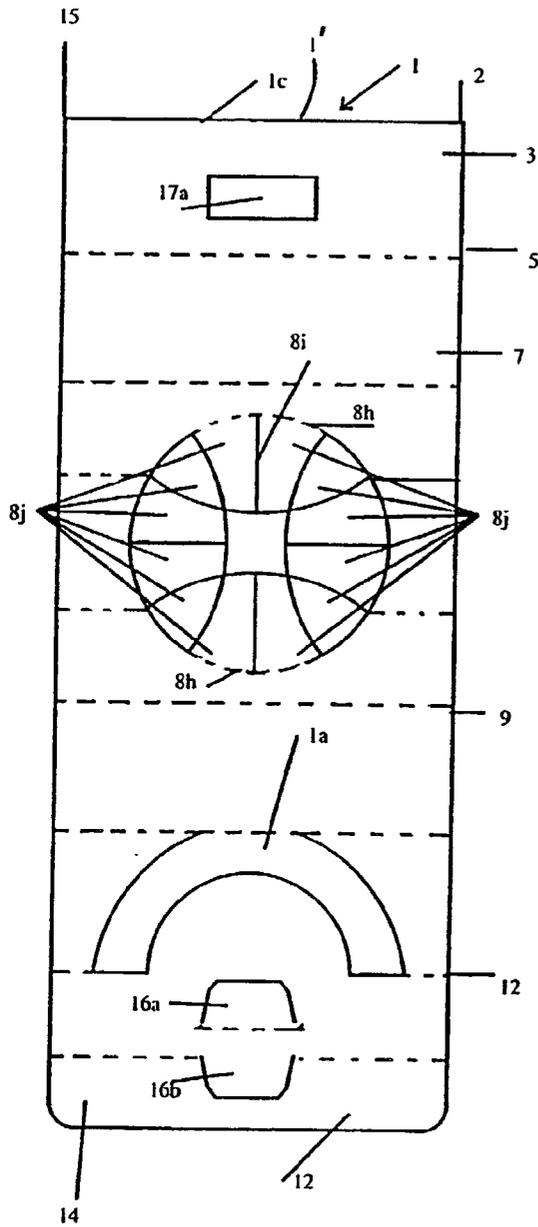


Fig 28

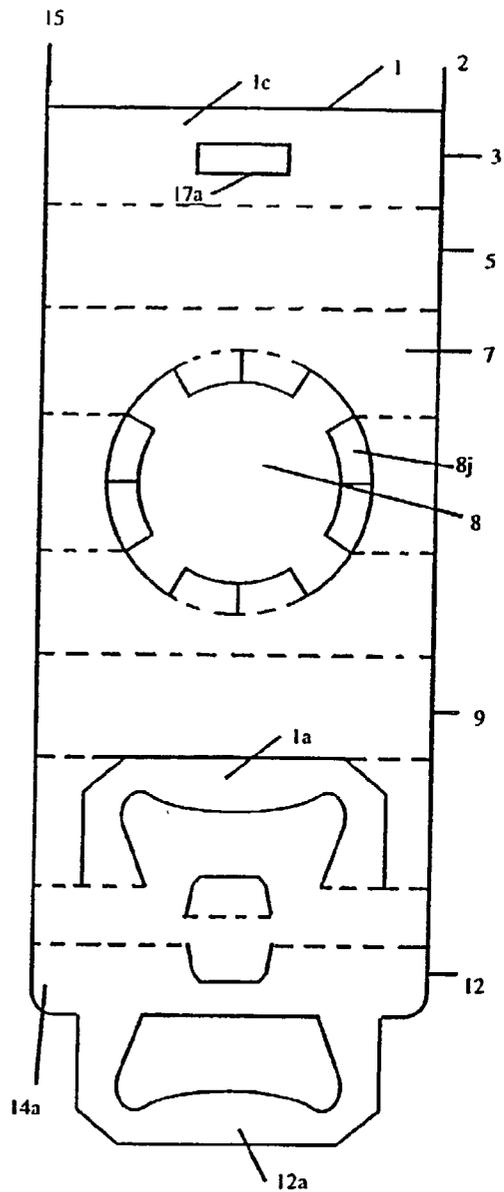
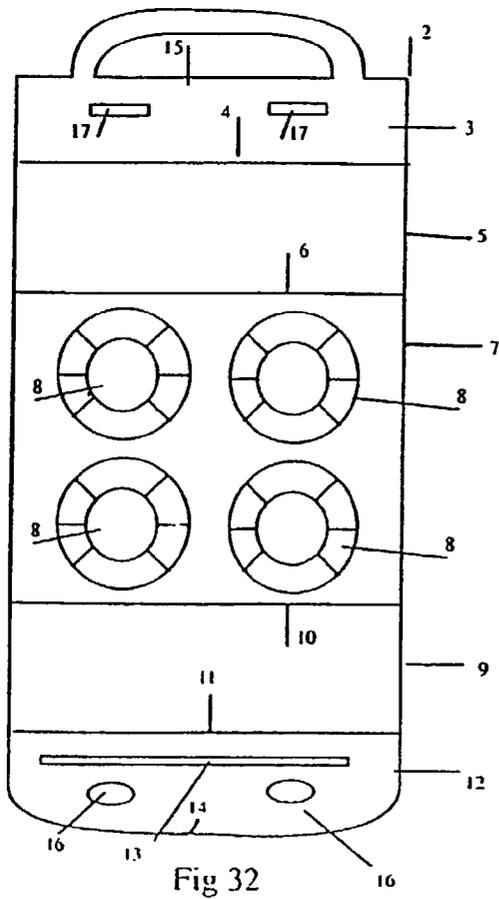
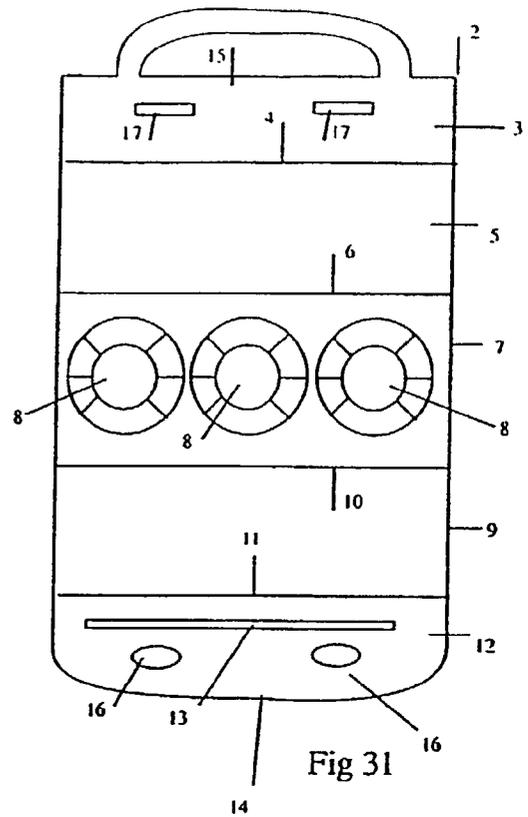
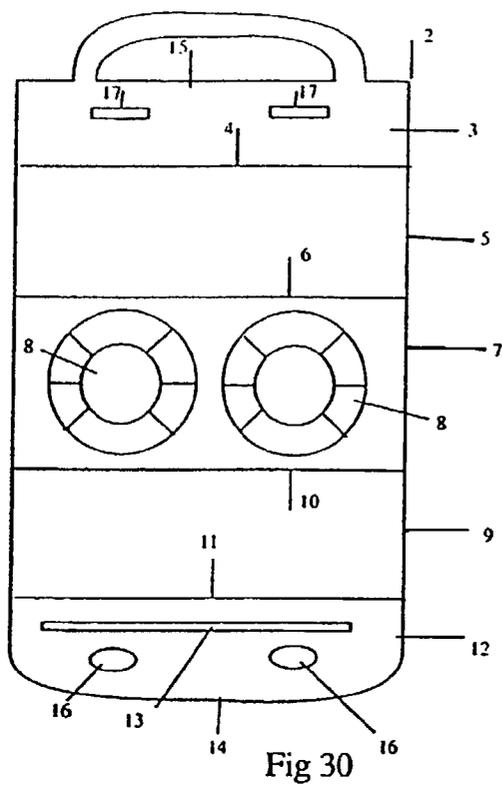


Fig 29



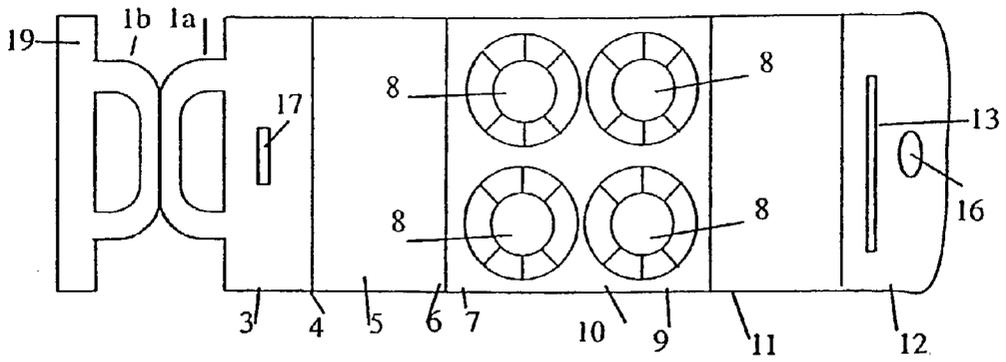


Fig 35

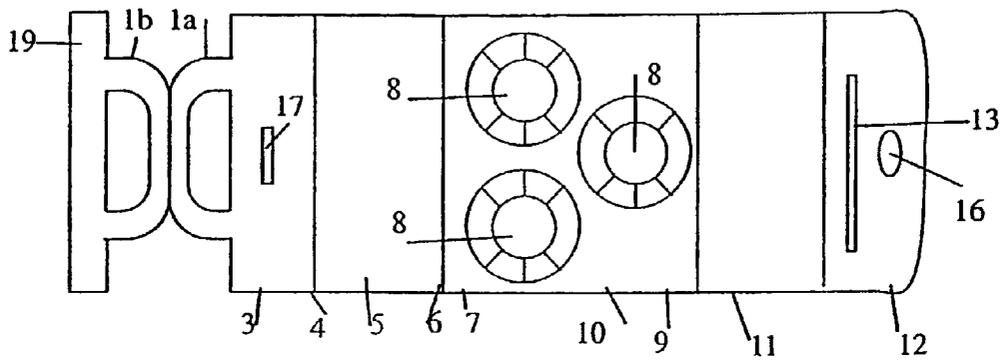


Fig 34

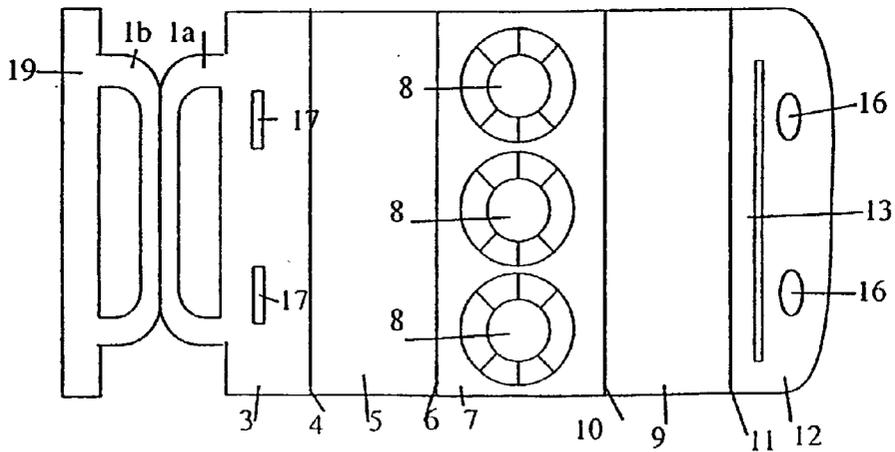


Fig 33

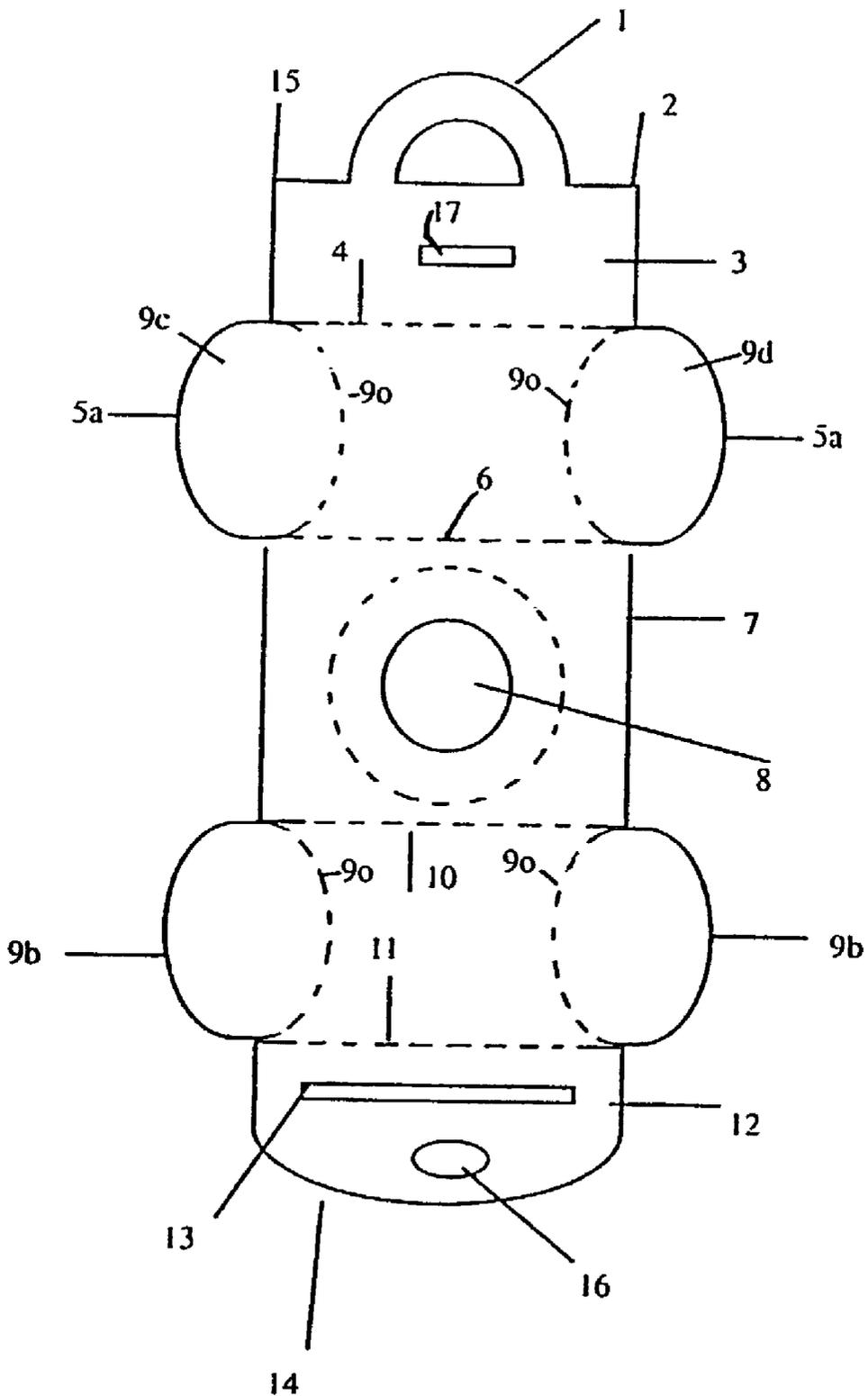


Fig 36

CONFIGURABLE CUP HOLDER

[0001] This invention relates to a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier for the cup or receptacle and also to such a carrier and a blank or flat for forming such a carrier. In particular, but not exclusively, this invention relates to a holder wherein the receptacle is a cup for vendable goods such as goods purchased from a retail or consumer store or outlet, for example, goods such as hot beverages, snacks and so on.

[0002] Conventionally hot beverages are supplied to consumers in a disposable cardboard, polystyrene or plastics cup. Such cups can be difficult for the consumer to carry, especially when they contain a hot beverage.

[0003] Some vendors of hot beverages provide the consumer with a paper napkin to wrap around the cup so as to protect the consumer's fingers. However, although a paper napkin may protect the consumer's fingers, it can also make the cup more difficult to hold securely and the paper napkin may easily be displaced or dropped.

[0004] Other vendors package the hot beverage containing cup in a rectangular carrier bag which may be made from paper, card or plastic, for example. Such carrier bags only enable transportation of the hot beverage containing cup and the cup has to be removed from the carrier bag to enable the hot beverage to be consumed. Furthermore, the bases of such bags do not provide a stable standing area for the hot beverage containing cup because they tend to be soft and flexible. This means that there is a likelihood of spillage of hot liquid from the cup.

[0005] Other vendors provide outer sleeves which consist of an endless band of corrugated card, recycled paper stuff or similar material that is supplied in a flattened form and opened out by the vendor or consumer so as to enable the hot beverage containing cup to be placed within the sleeve. Such sleeves do serve to protect the consumer's fingers and assist the consumer in carrying the cup. They do, however, also transmit heat.

[0006] Each of the above described prior arrangements provides only one way of carrying the cup or receptacle.

[0007] In one aspect, the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier for the cup or receptacle, the holder being capable of adopting at least one or more of the following:

[0008] a first configuration in which a base of the cup or receptacle is supported by a portion of the carrier;

[0009] a second configuration in which the cup or receptacle is suspended beneath a portion of the carrier, for example the cup may extend through an aperture provided by the carrier; and

[0010] a third configuration in which the carrier provides a loop or band extending around the circumference of the cup.

[0011] In one aspect of the present invention there is provided a cup or receptacle carrier which is convertible between a flat strip or flat pack configuration for storage and transportation and a three-dimensional shape in which the carrier partially or fully encloses the cup or receptacle.

[0012] In one aspect of the present invention a cup or receptacle carrier provides a handle for enabling a user to hold the cup or receptacle without necessarily touching the side or wall of the cup or receptacle.

[0013] In one aspect, the present invention provides a carrier formed from a flat sheet or blank having edge portions and fold lines for enabling the sheet or blank to be formed into an endless or continuous loop having a three-dimensional shape. In an embodiment, the endless or continuous loop is formed without the aid of gluing enabling cheap manufacture.

[0014] As used herein, the term "fold-lines" includes any line about which the material forming the flat sheet or blank can be folded including, for example, seam lines or weakened or perforated areas.

[0015] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier, comprising an endless loop or band wherein part of the endless loop or band provides an aperture defining portion for receiving a cup or receptacle. The aperture defining portion may comprise an actual aperture, slits, perforations or a push out section. In an embodiment, the carrier provides a handle opposed to the aperture defining portion.

[0016] In one aspect the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup and a carrier for the cup, wherein the holder can adopt:

[0017] a first configuration in which a base of the cup is supported by a portion of the carrier;

[0018] a second configuration in which the cup is suspended beneath a part of the carrier; and

[0019] a third configuration in which the carrier surrounds a peripheral side wall of the cup, wherein the carrier provides a handle graspable by a user in at least one of the above configurations, preferably in both said second and third configurations.

[0020] In one aspect, the present invention provides a carrier formed from a flat or blank wherein the flat or blank defines at least one handle portion which projects from an edge of the flat or blank or is defined within the body of the flat or blank. A double thickness handle can be provided to provide increased strength by providing two handle portions which can be grasped simultaneously by the user in use of the carrier. The handle portions may be provided at, for example, opposite edges of a flat or blank forming the carrier. The flat or blank may be formed with coupling means in addition to the handle. In an embodiment, the coupling means may cooperate with the handle.

[0021] In an embodiment, a cup carrier comprises a flat or blank having opposite edge portions, a handle portion and a handle receiving portion, whereby, when the flat or blank is manipulated to bring the two edge portions together, the handle can be passed through the handle receiving portion so as to form the carrier. The flat or blank may be formed with fold lines to facilitate manipulation of the flat or blank to form the carrier. The fold lines may be such that the carrier adopts a rectangular or polygonal cross sectional shapes. An additional locking tab may be provided on at least one end portion.

[0022] In one aspect the present invention provides a holder comprising a cup or receptacle and a carrier, wherein

the carrier comprises a flat or blank having a cup or receptacle receiving region and wherein, in order to use the holder, the cup or receptacle is placed on the receiving area and the flat or blank manipulated to bring edge portions of the blank together above the cup or receptacle to define a handle graspable by a user. In an embodiment, the receiving region comprises an aperture defining region so that the cup or receptacle is suspended from the carrier when the carrier is transported by a user. Generally, the side walls of the cup or receptacle will be gripped by the aperture by taking advantage of the fact that such cups or receptacles taper towards their bases. This provides a gimbal like support reducing the possibility of spillage even if the carrier swings as the user moves about. Such a carrier may be inverted so that, when the cup or receptacle is received through the aperture, a portion of the carrier provides a support for the base of the cup or receptacle and the region of the carrier bounded the aperture surrounds the peripheral side walls of the cup or receptacle. Where a handle or handle portion is provided on the carrier, then this will lie flat against the carrier in this configuration.

[0023] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with a moulded plastic handle or a carrying cord in place of a handle for facilitating carrying and may be placed in a conventional paper carrier bag.

[0024] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier comprising a flat or blank having fastening or coupling means provided on opposite end portions of the flat or blank the fastening means being arranged to couple together to define the carrier, one of the fastening means comprising a tab and the other a slit or slot for receiving the tab. Additional cooperating tabs and slots may be provided.

[0025] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with other forms of fastening or coupling means such as self-adhesive areas or regions or other forms of interlocking or coupling means.

[0026] A carrier embodying the invention need not necessarily be provided with coupling means, for example the carrier may be initially formed (for example moulded) as an endless band or loop.

[0027] A carrier embodying the invention may be provided with handle portions that a user squeezes together to define an endless loop. One of the handle portions may be provided with a locking flap to lock the handle portions together.

[0028] A carrier embodying the invention may be formed from a flat or blank having regions projecting from the main area of the flat or blank to define side walls of the carrier in use.

[0029] Generally, a carrier embodying the invention will enable at least part of a cup or receptacle carried by the carrier to be viewed.

[0030] A carrier embodying the invention is adapted to be provided as a flat or two-dimensional shape and to be manipulated to provide a three-dimensional carrier by the vendor or purchaser of the goods contained in the cup or receptacle to be received the carrier.

[0031] A holder embodying the invention capable of adopting the first and second configurations mentioned above may be sized so as to enable a plurality of cups or

receptacles to be received by the carrier. In such a case, the carrier may be provided with a corresponding number of cup or receptacle receiving portions which may be of the same or different sizes or shape to enable different shapes and sizes of cup or receptacle to be accommodated, for example both a cup containing a beverage and a sandwich or other take away food container.

[0032] Embodiments of the present invention will now be described, by way of example, with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

[0033] **FIG. 1** shows a first embodiment of a flat or blank for forming a carrier in accordance with the present invention;

[0034] **FIGS. 2 and 3** are perspective views showing, respectively, two different forms of a carrier formed from the blank shown in **FIG. 1**;

[0035] **FIGS. 4 to 6** are perspective views showing three different configurations of a holder embodying the present invention comprising a carrier formed from the blank shown in **FIG. 1** and a cup or receptacle;

[0036] **FIGS. 7 to 29** shows various different modified forms of the flat or blank shown in **FIG. 1**;

[0037] **FIGS. 30 to 35** show flats or blanks suitable for forming carriers for carrying 2, 3, 4, 3, 3 and 4, respectively, cups or receptacles; and

[0038] **FIG. 36** shows another flat or blank for forming a carrier.

[0039] Referring now to the drawings **FIG. 1** shows a first embodiment of a carrier or container **100** in accordance with the present invention.

[0040] The carrier is in the form of a blank or flat which may be formed from, for example, a single sheet of card or paper which may be plain or corrugated. Other materials which hold their shape when folded or formed into an endless band or loop may be used such as, for example, synthetic rubber such as neoprene, rigid or semi-rigid plastic materials such as rigid polyolefins, for example polypropylenes or polyvinylchloride (PVC) and other semi-rigid plastic materials. Leather or reinforced or stiffened cloth may also be used. Where card, paper, cardboard or other relatively non-waterproof material is used, then these may be coated with a synthetic or other water resistant coating to improve wear. Decorative, advertising or informative printing may be applied to the blank and other decorating techniques such as inscribing, foiling or embossing may be used.

[0041] Generally a large number of blanks will be cut from a single sheet of the material using conventional cutting procedures.

[0042] As shown in **FIG. 1**, the blank is generally rectangular and has first and second elongate side edges **2** and **15** and relatively shorter end or edge portions **1** and **14**.

[0043] A cup or receptacle receiving region is provided generally equi-distant from the edge portions **1** and **14**. In this embodiment, the cup receiving region **8** is defined by a central circular aperture **8a**, a larger concentric circular fold line **8b** and a plurality of slits **8c** provided in the region between the circular aperture **8a** and the circular fold line **8b**.

The slits **8c** radiate outwardly from the common centre of the circular aperture **8a** and the circular fold line **8b** and are equally angularly spaced about the periphery of the circular fold line **8b**.

[0044] The end portion **1** is shaped so as to provide a handle portion **1a** which is, in this embodiment, a generally D or U shaped handle portion. The other end portion **14** is rounded or curved and a slit **13** is provided adjacent the end portion **14** for receiving the handle portion **1a**. In this embodiment, the end portions **1** and **14** also carry coupling means in the form of a tab **16** arranged to be received in a slit **17**. As shown, the slit **17** is provided at the end portion **1** in from the handle portion **1a** while the tab **16** is provided in the end portion **14** closer to the end of the end portion than the slit **13**. The tab is defined during the blank cutting process so that the majority of the periphery of the tab is separated from the remainder of the end portion but so that the tab remains attached to the remainder of the blank and can be pivoted or bent out of the plane of the blank.

[0045] The blank is also formed with four fold lines, **4**, **6**, **10** and **11** which separate the blank into a first portion **3**, a second portion **5**, a third portion **7**, a fourth portion **9** and a fifth portion **12**. As shown, the fold lines extend perpendicularly of the side edges **2** and **15**.

[0046] The carrier is intended to enable a user or consumer to carry or support a cup or receptacle containing goods obtained or purchased from a supplier. In particular, the carrier is primarily intended for enabling a consumer to carry or support a disposable, generally cardboard or plastics, cup containing a hot beverage such as tea or coffee.

[0047] As will be explained below, the carrier **100** can be used with a cup or receptacle to define a number of different holder configurations. In each of these configurations, the blank is formed into an endless loop by folding the blank about the fold lines **4**, **6**, **10** and **11**, passing the handle **1a** through the slit **13** and passing the tab **16** through this slit **17**.

[0048] Various configurations of holder using the carrier **100** will now be illustrated with reference to FIGS. 2 to 6.

[0049] FIG. 2 shows the carrier **100** formed into an endless band so that the cup receiving region **8** is uppermost and the handle portion **1a** is positioned flat against the fifth portion **12**. In this orientation, the first and fifth portions **3** and **12** form a base of the carrier while the second and fourth portion **5** and **9** form side walls of the carrier and the third portion **7** forms a top of the carrier. The base of the carrier may be supported in the hand of a user or on a support surface such as a table, work top or desk. FIG. 5 shows a first configuration of a holder in accordance with the present invention wherein a cup **200** (shown in dotted line) is placed in the circular aperture **8a** so that a base **201** (not visible in FIG. 5) of the cup is supported on the base formed by the first and fifth portions **3** and **12** of the carrier **100**. In this configuration, the carrier ensures that the cup **200** is held upright. This configuration is particularly advantageous for supporting the cup on a support surface in a moving vehicle such as a train or boat and also for supporting the cup on a desk, table or work top to reduce the likelihood of the cup being knocked over spilling hot liquid on to the surrounding surface.

[0050] FIG. 4 shows a second configuration for the holder. In this configuration, the orientation of the carrier **100** is

inverted so that the first and fifth portions **3** and **12** form a top and the third portion **7** forms a base of the carrier. In this configuration, the cup **200** is, by virtue of its tapering shape gripped by the slitted portion of the carrier so as to be suspended. In order to adopt this holder configuration, the cup **200** is first placed within the aperture **8a** and then the end portions **1** and **14** of the carrier are brought together to define the endless loop or band. In this configuration a user or consumer can carry the holder by the handle portion **1a** of the carrier **100** securely without having to touch the walls of the cup **200** which may have become hot due to the hot liquid within the cup. This holder configuration also provides a gimbal like effect so that the carrier can be swung without spillage from the cup. This reduces the possibility of spillage of the cup when user is walking or otherwise moving around holding the carrier or the cup is being held by the user in a moving vehicle such as a car, train or boat. Also, this holder configuration enables the user to have greater freedom of movement and to carry more goods.

[0051] FIGS. 3 and 6 illustrate a third configuration that the holder can adopt. In this configuration the carrier **100** is rotated through 90° from the orientation shown in FIG. 4 so that the first to fifth portions **3**, **5**, **7**, **9** and **12** all form side walls and the handle portion **1a** projects outwardly from the carrier. As shown in FIG. 6, in this holder configuration, the cup **200** is received within the carrier **100** so that the carrier forms an endless band or loop around the peripheral side walls **203** of the cup. In this configuration the holder enables the user to carry or transport the cup by grasping the handle **1a**, and enables the user to drink without touching the hot cup.

[0052] A user or consumer may use any one or more of the holder configuration shown in FIGS. 4 to 6. Thus, for example, a user may carry the hot beverage from the place of purchase using the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4 and then, to enable the beverage to be consumed, may release the coupling mechanism of the carrier **100**, remove the cup **200**, recouple the end portions of the carrier **100** and then reposition the cup **200** within the carrier **100** in either the holder configuration shown in FIG. 5 or the holder configuration shown in FIG. 6. A user may change the holder configuration from that shown in FIG. 5 to that shown in FIG. 6 or vice versa very easily without having to uncouple the end portions of the holder. Thus, a user may adopt the holder configuration shown in FIG. 6 while actually drinking from the cup **200** and may change the holder configuration to that shown in FIG. 5 when resting the cup on a surface such as a table desk or work top. It should also be appreciated that, with the holder configuration shown in FIGS. 5 and 6, the hot beverage may be poured into the cup **200** after the cup has been placed in the carrier **100**.

[0053] It will, of course, be appreciated that various modifications may be made to the carrier **100**. Thus, for example, the cup receiving region **8** may be defined in different ways, different forms of coupling mechanism other than the handle portion **1a** and slit **13** or tab **16** and slit **17** may be adopted and the location and/or number of the fold lines may be adjusted so as to accommodate cups having different aspect ratios. Indeed, the fold lines may be omitted so that the carrier forms a circular or elliptical rather than rectangular shape in cross sections. Also, the handle portion **1a** may be omitted, in which case a user would grasp the top of the

carrier in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4 and grasp the endless loop or band formed by the carrier in the configuration shown in FIG. 6.

[0054] In the embodiment shown in FIG. 1, the side edges 2 and 15 are straight and parallel to one another. This reduces the amount of waste material when a large number of blanks are cut from the same sheet and so should reduce the overall costs of the carrier 100. In addition, the curved end portion 14 may be shaped so as to further reduce the amount of waste material by, for example, making its shape the converse of the shape of the handle portion 1a or by providing a straight edge portion.

[0055] FIGS. 7 to 29 illustrate various modifications of the carrier 100 shown in FIG. 1.

[0056] The carriers 100 shown in FIGS. 7 and 8 are identical to that shown in FIG. 1 except that the side edges 2 and 15 are no longer parallel. In FIG. 7, the blank tapers towards the end portion 14 while in FIG. 8 the blank tapers towards the end portion 1.

[0057] FIG. 9 shows a blank that is identical to that shown in FIG. 1 apart from the fact that, in this case, the cup receiving region 8 is defined by first and second parallel slits 8d spaced apart in a direction perpendicular to the side edges 2 and 15 and a third transverse slit or weakened portion 8e which can be broken when pushed by a user or by a cup to define two flaps 8f and 8g which are pushed outwardly to define an aperture for receiving the cup.

[0058] FIG. 10 shows a further modification of the blank shown in FIG. 1. This blank differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the receptacle receiving region 8 does not provide an aperture but provides four pairs of spaced apart slots 80a and 80b with end fold lines 80c extending between adjacent edges of each pair of slots and an intermediate fold line 80d extending between centre points of the slots which coincide with the fold line 6. In this example, when the carrier is made up the regions defined by the slots 80a and 80b are pushed inwards to define right-angled strips that serve to retain the receptacle in place. This embodiment is intended primarily for receiving box-like receptacles such as sandwich packets rather than cups and the slitted regions serve to locate the receptacle securely on the base of the carrier 100 when the holder is in the configuration shown in FIG. 4. This carrier may also be used in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 6 to hold a cup rather than a box-like receptacle but would not generally be used to hold a cup in the configuration shown in FIGS. 4 and 5.

[0059] FIG. 11 shows another carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the cup receiving region 8 consists of a single circular aperture 81 and the fold lines are omitted so that, in this example, when the end portions 1 and 14 are coupled, the carrier forms an endless band of circular or elliptical cross sections.

[0060] FIG. 12 shows another modification of the carrier 100 shown in FIG. 1. In this modification the handle 1a is omitted and the number of slits in the area between the circular aperture 8a and the circular fold line 8b is reduced. As mentioned above, the edge of the end portion 14 may be straight rather than curved which would further reduce the amount of waste material which a plurality of blanks are cut from a single sheet.

[0061] The modified carrier shown in FIG. 13 is, like the carrier shown in FIG. 10, intended to receive a box-like receptacle so that, in the holder configuration shown in FIG. 4, the box like receptacle is supported on the base portion 7 rather than suspended therefrom. This carrier may also be useable to carry cups in the configuration shown in FIG. 6. In addition, the carrier shown in FIGS. 10 and 13 may also be useable to carry cups in the configuration shown in FIG. 5 if the receptacle supporting region 82 is bounded by a weakened portion or is otherwise frangible so that an aperture can easily be formed to receive a cup. It will, of course, be appreciated that, once this is done, the carrier may no longer be used to support a box-like receptacle on its base when in the configuration shown in FIG. 4. FIG. 13 also shows a differently shaped handle portion 1a.

[0062] FIG. 14 shows a modified carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 solely by virtue of the shape of the handle portion 1a (the slits have been omitted in the cup receiving region 8 in the interest of simplicity).

[0063] FIG. 15 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 11 in that the straight edges 2 and 15 are replaced by wavy edges while FIG. 16 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 1 (again the slits 8c in the cup receiving region 8 have been omitted in the interest of simplicity) by virtue of the fact that the fold lines 6 and 10 are curved rather than straight.

[0064] FIG. 17 shows a carrier that differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that the fold lines 4, 6, 10 and 11 are at an acute angle to the edges 2 and 15 with the slit 13 being parallel to the fold lines. FIG. 18 shows a further modification in which the fold lines 4 and 6 are no longer parallel to the fold lines 10, 11 and the slit 13 while FIG. 19 shows a variation in which the side edges 2 and 15 are not perpendicular to an edge 1' of the end portion 1a and FIG. 20 shows a variation in which the side edges 2 and 15 both bow outwardly. A further variation would be for these two edges to both bow inwardly, of course. These variations enable different decorative or visual effects to be achieved without affecting the overall function of the carrier.

[0065] FIG. 21 shows a blank for a carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 in that each of the end portions 1 and 14 has a handle portion 1a and 14a and no separate coupling means is provided. With this blank, a user brings the two handle portions 1a and 14a together and the carrier 100 is formed into an endless loop by virtue of the user gripping and holding together the two handle portions 1a and 1b. This facilitates rapid returning of the carrier to its flat form and interchange between the configurations shown in FIGS. 4 and 6. Although there is no fastening mechanism between the handle portions 1a and 14a in this blank, it may still be possible to adopt the holder configuration shown in FIG. 5 because the weight of the cup or receptacle 200 pressing the handle portions down onto the supporting surface will hold the end portions 1 and 14 of the carrier together. A fastening mechanism may be provided by, instead of cutting out the D-shape portion 14d, defining an arcuate cut line 14e and a fold line 14f forming a D shaped flap 14d which can be received through the cut-out 1b of the other handle portion 1a and pivoted about the fold line 14f to hold the two handle portions together.

[0066] FIG. 22 shows a blank for a carrier which differs from that shown in FIG. 1 (again the slits 8c are omitted

from the cup receiving region **8** for simplicity) by the provision of side regions **9b** projecting transversely from the fourth portion **9** and each having an end flap **9a**. With this blank, when the carrier is in the configuration shown in **FIG. 4** or **5**, the side portions **9b** may be bent to 90° relative to the portion **9** and the end flaps **9a** tucked inside the end portion **5** so as to define side walls for the carrier which may reduce the possibility of any accidental spillage from the cup **200** soiling the clothes of the user in the configuration shown in **FIG. 4** and may, in both the configuration shown in **FIG. 4** and in **FIG. 5**, assist in retaining heat in the receptacle **200**. This carrier may also be used in the configuration shown in **FIG. 6** by folding the side portions with their end flaps to the inside of the carrier.

[0067] **FIG. 23** shows a variation of the blank shown in **FIG. 22** in which four flaps **9a** to **9d** are provided each formed with a slit **9e**. When this blank is made up into the carrier, the flaps **9a** and **9c** and the flaps **9b** and **9d** are folded towards one another and one slit is received by another to define side walls.

[0068] **FIG. 24** shows a blank for a carrier that is identical (the slits **8c** in the cup receiving region **8** are omitted in the interest of simplicity) to that shown in **FIG. 1** except that the relative dimensions of the portions **3**, **5**, **7**, **9** and **12** have been adjusted to enable accommodation of receptacles of different aspect ratio. This would provide the carrier with relatively high side walls in the configuration shown in **FIG. 4** so that the cup **200** may stand proud of the base.

[0069] **FIG. 25** shows a blank for a carrier which is identical to that shown in **FIG. 1** (the slits **8c** in the cup receiving region **8** are omitted in the interest of simplicity) except that the handle portion **1a** has a mirror image handle portion **1b** connected to a reinforcing portion **19**. The mirror image handle portion **1b** is connected to the handle portion **1a** by a fold line or weakened portion **18** enabling the mirror image handle portion **1b** to be folded back down on top of or beneath the handle portion **1a** so as to reinforce the handle portion.

[0070] **FIG. 26** shows a blank for a carrier that differs from the blank shown in **FIG. 1** (again the slits in the cup receiving region **8** are omitted in the interest of simplicity) in that the slit **13** through which the handle portion **1a** passes is supplemented by tabs **20** provided on either side of the slit **13** and arranged to fold over the end portion **1** on either side of the handle portion **1a** when the end portions **1** and **14** are coupled together. These tab portions **20** serve to increase the robustness of the coupling mechanism.

[0071] **FIG. 27** shows a further variant which, like the variant shown in **FIG. 25**, has a mirror image handle portion **1b** (in this drawing fold lines are shown as dashed). In this embodiment, the handle portion **1b** is provided with a tab **1c**, which, when the handle portion **1b** is folded back on the handle portion **1a** is wrapped around the handle portion **1a** to hold the two together. In addition, the score or cut lines used to define the slit **13a** also define small tabs **20a** on either side of the slit **13a** which function in the same manner as the tabs **20** shown in **FIG. 26**. **FIG. 27** also shows a different way of forming the tab **16a** by defining a curve, generally semi-circular cut in the blank. Also, in this embodiment, a number of the flap portions **8c** defined by the slits **8c** are removed so as to reduce the resistance to insertion of a cup into the aperture **8a**. Also, the end portion **14** is shown as

generally straight so as to reduce wastage of the material when a number of blanks are cut from the same sheet.

[0072] **FIG. 28** shows a further variant in which fold lines are shown as dotted lines and cut through lines are shown as solid lines. This variant differs from that shown in **FIG. 1** in that: the handle portion does not project from an end portion of the blank but is formed as a cut out **1a'** within the body of the portion **9**; the cup receiving region is defined by a circular fold line **8h** and a number of arcuate and straight cut through lines **8i** to define, again, a number of flaps **8j** that are pressed outwardly by insertion of the cup to define an aperture; and the slit and tab coupling arrangement shown in **FIG. 1** is replaced by a slot **17a** and tabs **16a** and **16b**.

[0073] In this embodiment, when the end portions are coupled together, the tabs **16a** and **16b** are folded round respective edges of the portion **1c** of the end portion **1** between the edge of the end portion and the slot **17a**. When a cup is received in the cup receiving region the flaps **8j** extend over a greater portion of the cup side wall than in the carrier shown in **FIG. 1** and help to return heat in the cup.

[0074] **FIG. 29** shows a variant of the blank shown in **FIG. 28** in which the flaps **8j** of the cup receiving region **8** have been shortened by defining an inner circular aperture and in which the handle portion is provided by both a cut-out handle portion **1a** and a projecting handle portion **12a** which, when the carrier is made up, can be grasped together by the user to provide a stronger handle.

[0075] It will be appreciated that many different combinations of the modifications shown in **FIGS. 7** to **29** may be applied to the carrier shown in **FIG. 1**. In addition, the carrier need not have a releasable coupling means. Rather, the first and second end portions have self-adhesive regions or may be permanently fixed together to define the endless loop or band. This would allow the carrier to be used interchangeably in the configuration shown in **FIGS. 5** and **6** and in the configuration described above where a box like receptacle is rested on the base of the carrier in the configuration similar to that shown in **FIG. 4**. However, if a releasable coupling mechanism is not provided, then, if the carrier is coupled into the configuration shown in **FIG. 4**, the carrier will need to be destroyed to remove a cup. This provides a tamper-proof feature for retail outlets.

[0076] Each of the carriers described above is designed to carry a single cup or receptacle. **FIGS. 30** to **35** show carriers capable of carrying multiple cups or receptacles. These carriers are designed to be able to adopt the configuration shown in **FIG. 4** or **FIG. 5** but not the configuration shown in **FIG. 6**.

[0077] The carriers shown in **FIGS. 30** to **32** are based on the carrier shown in **FIG. 1** with the exception, that in each case, the coupling mechanism comprising the tab **16** and **17** is doubled up so that each carrier has two tabs and two slits and in the case of **FIGS. 30** and **31** the width of the carrier is increased so as to accommodate two and three, respectively, cup receiving regions **8** and in the case of the carrier shown in **FIG. 32**, both dimensions of the portion **7** are increased so as to accommodate four cup receiving portions.

[0078] The multiple cup or receptacle carriers shown in **FIGS. 33** to **35** are based on the carrier shown in **FIG. 25**. In the case of the carrier shown in **FIG. 33**, again the tab and slot arrangements **16** and **17** is doubled up and the width of

the carrier is increased to accommodate three cup receiving regions **8**. In the case of the carriers shown in **FIGS. 34 and 35**, the dimensions of the portion **7** of the carrier are increased to accommodate **3** and **4** respectively, cup receiving areas.

[**0079**] **FIG. 36** shows a variant of the blank shown in **FIG. 23**. The rectangular flaps are replaced by generally elliptical flaps **9a** to **9d** inset into the body of the blank and having inner edges defined by fold lines **90**. When this carrier is made up, the curved fold lines **90** cause the side walls or flaps **9a** to **9d** to bow inwardly. Again, these flaps, serve to retain heat. This modification can be applied to any of the carriers described above.

[**0080**] In the above described embodiments, the carrier may be provided with an integral handle. As another possibility, the carrier may be provided with apertures for receiving a carrying cord.

[**0081**] In the majority of the embodiments described above, the cup or receptacle receiving region provides an aperture through which at least part of the cup may be passed. The aperture may be present in the carrier or may be defined by a frangible portion which is removed by pressure from, a user or by pressing the cup on to the blank or an already-formed carrier. As another possibility, the cup or receptacle receiving area need not necessarily define an aperture but may define a depression into which the cup or receptacle is seated. In this case, if the holder configuration shown in **FIG. 4** is to be adopted, then the side walls defined by the portions **9** and **5** of the blank should have sufficient height to accommodate the cup once received in the depression.

[**0082**] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless band or loop which, in use, bounds or defines an aperture which receives the cup so that the band or loop surrounds and grips the cup and which also has an integrally provided handle for enabling a user to carry the cup.

[**0083**] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless loop having an integral handle, with a portion of the carrier defining a cup receiving region in which, in use, the cup sits beneath the handle.

[**0084**] In one aspect, the present invention provides a cup carrier formed from a blank into an endless loop defining a cup receiving region for supporting a cup in an upright position on a surface.

[**0085**] Although a carrier embodying the present invention is intended primarily for enabling a user to carry or transport disposable cups or receptacles containing a hot beverage, the carrier may also be used with disposable or non-disposable cups or other receptacles for containing cold beverages, take away food packets or containers (for sandwiches, pasta, salad etc) snacks and other consumer products including, for example, gardening items such as bulbs or the like to be planted.

[**0086**] In any of the above described examples, the receptacle or cup receiving region will be shaped and sized to receive a particular cup or receptacle and need not necessarily be circular but could be rectangular, for example. Where a carrier provides more than one receptacle or cup

receiving region then these may have different sizes and/or shapes enabling for example both a beverage cup and a take away food packet or container to be carried.

1. A vendable goods holder, comprising:

a receptacle for receiving goods and a carrier for enabling a purchaser of the goods to carry or support the receptacle, the holder being configurable in at least two of:

a first configuration in which a portion of the carrier supports a base of the receptacle;

a second configuration in which the receptacle is suspended beneath part of the carrier; and

a third configuration in which the carrier provides a band around the receptacle.

2. A beverages holder, comprising a disposable cup for containing the beverage and a carrier for enabling a user to carry or support the cup, the holder being configurable in at least two of:

a first configuration in which a portion of the carrier supports a base of the cup;

a second configuration in which the cup is suspended beneath part of the carrier; and

a third configuration in which the carrier provides a band around the cup.

3. A holder according to claim 1, which is configurable in the second configuration, wherein the carrier provides a handle graspable by a user in the second configuration.

4. A holder according to claim 1, configurable in the third configuration wherein the carrier provides a handle graspable by a user in the third configuration.

5. A holder according to claim 1, configurable in at least the second and third configurations wherein the carrier provides a handle graspable by a user in both the first and third configurations.

6. A holder according to claim 1, configurable in the first configuration, wherein the carrier has an aperture defining portion through which the cup extends in the first configuration so as to be supported by a portion of the carrier opposed to the aperture defining portion.

7. A holder according to claim 1, configurable in the second configuration, wherein the carrier has an aperture defining portion through which the cup or receptacle extends so as to be suspended from the carrier in the second configuration.

8. A holder according to claim 1, configurable in at least the first and second configurations wherein the carrier has an aperture defining portion for providing an aperture through which the cup or receptacle extends so as to be supported by said portion of the carrier in the first configuration and through which the cup or receptacle extends in the second configuration so as to be suspended from the carrier.

9. A holder according to claim 6, wherein the aperture defining portion comprises a frangible portion.

10. A holder according to claim 6, wherein the aperture defining portion comprises a plurality of slits.

11. A carrier according to claim 6, wherein the aperture defining portion comprises an aperture bounded by a slitted periphery.

12. A holder according to claim 6, wherein the carrier has a plurality of such aperture defining portions.

13. A holder according to claim 1, wherein the carrier comprises a blank having first and second ends that are couplable together to define the carrier.

14. A holder according to claim 12, wherein the first and second edges carry respective coupling portions one of which comprises a slot and the other of which comprises a flap or projection which extends through the slot.

15. A holder according to claim 14, wherein the projection or tab also provides a handle.

16. A holder according to claim 14, wherein each coupling portion comprises a slot and a projection or tab with the slot of one coupling portion being cooperable with the tab of the other coupling portion.

17. A holder according to claim 1, wherein the carrier has fold lines for facilitating adoption of said at least two of said first to third configurations.

18. A carrier for use in a holder in accordance with claim 1, wherein the carrier comprises an endless band defining a cup or receptacle receiving region, the carrier being adapted to hold the cup or receptacle in at least two of:

a first configuration in which a support portion of the endless band opposed to the receiving region can be supported on a support surface, thereby enabling a cup or receptacle received by the receiving region to be supported in an upright condition on the support surface;

a second configuration in which a cup or receptacle is received by the receiving region and the carrier can be carried by the support portion so that the cup or receptacle is suspended below the support portion; and

a third configuration in which a cup or receptacle is received within the endless band and the cup or receptacle can be carried by a user grasping the carrier.

19. A carrier according to claim 18, comprising a flat sheet having end portions and coupling means for coupling the end portions to define the endless band.

20. A carrier according to claim 18, wherein the carrier comprises a flat sheet having end portions adhered together to form the endless band.

21. A carrier according to claim 19, wherein the coupling means comprise at least one of:

cooperating tabs or projections, cooperating projections and slits, cooperating handle portions and slit and cooperating handle portions.

22. A carrier according to claim 19, wherein the coupling means comprise handle portions holdable together to define the endless band.

23. A carrier according to claim 18, wherein the receiving region comprises a depression.

24. A carrier according to claim 18, wherein the receiving region comprises an aperture defining region defined by at least one of:

a frangible area of the endless band and slits or slots formed in the endless band.

25. A carrier according to claims 18, wherein the support portion provides an integral handle.

26. A carrier according to claim 25, wherein the handle is provided by a cut out formed in the endless band.

27. A carrier according to claim 18, wherein the cup or receptacle providing region is adapted to receive a plurality of cups or receptacles.

28. A carrier according to claim 18, wherein the endless band is formed with fold lines for defining separate wall portions of the carrier in use.

29. A carrier according to claims 18, wherein the carrier is formed from at least one of:

paper, card, cardboard, a plastics material, corrugated paper, plastics or cardboard, rubber, reinforced cloth, leather.

30. A blank for forming a carrier for use in a holder in accordance with claim 1, wherein the blank has opposed end portions and an intermediate portion, the intermediate portion having a cup receiving region and a part of the blank providing an integral handle portion for the carrier, the end portions of the blank being arranged to be coupled together to form an endless band in use.

31. A blank according to claim 30, wherein the end portions of the blank having coupling means for releasably coupling together the end portions of the blank.

32. A blank according to claim 31, wherein the coupling means comprise at least one of cooperating tabs or projections, cooperating projections and slits, cooperating handle portion and slit and cooperating handle portions.

33. A blank according to claim 31, wherein the coupling means comprise respective handle portions provided by the end portions, the handle portions being arranged to be holdable together to define an endless band.

34. A blank according to claim 33, wherein one of the handle portions defines a securing element receivable through an aperture in the other handle portion.

35. A blank according to claim 30, wherein the cup or receptacle receiving region comprises at least one of slots, cut outs and fold lines for defining a depression for receiving a cup or receptacle in use.

36. A blank according to claim 30, wherein the cup receiving region is an aperture defining region.

37. A blank according to claim 36, wherein the aperture defining region comprises at least one of a frangible section, slit and an aperture.

38. A blank according to claim 30, wherein the cup or receptacle receiving region is arranged to receive a plurality of cups or receptacles.

39. A blank according to claim 30, separated by fold lines into a plurality of portions which define respective different walls of the carrier in use.

40. A blank according to claim 30, further comprising projecting side portions for closing open sides of the carrier during use.

41. A blank according to claim 30, wherein the blank is formed from at least one of:

paper, card, cardboard, a plastics material, corrugated card, plastics or cardboard or paper, rubber, reinforced cloth or leather.

* * * * *