



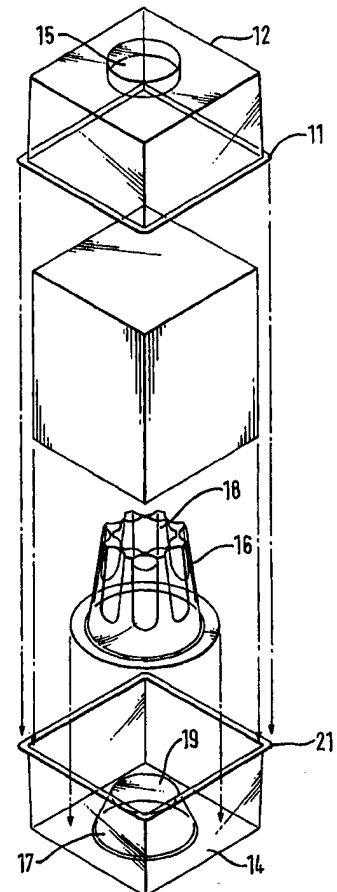
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<p>(21) International Application Number: PCT/GB98/00370 (22) International Filing Date: 6 February 1998 (06.02.98) (30) Priority Data: 9702484.8 7 February 1997 (07.02.97) GB (71) Applicant: ALLIGATOR SALES LIMITED [GB/GB]; Units 2 & 3, Third floor, Harbour Yard, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10 0XD (GB). (72) Inventor: WAUGH, James; Alligator Sales Limited, Units 2 & 3, 3rd floor, Harbour Yard, Chelsea Harbour, London SW10 0XD (GB). (74) Agent: HARLAND, Linda, Jane; Reddie & Grose, 16 Theobalds Road, London WC1X 8PL (GB).</p>		<p>(81) Designated States: BR, MX, European patent (AT, BE, CH, DE, DK, ES, FI, FR, GB, GR, IE, IT, LU, MC, NL, PT, SE). Published <i>With international search report. Before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of the receipt of amendments.</i></p>

(54) Title: ATTACHMENT FOR BOTTLE NECK

(57) Abstract

A container (10) suitable for mounting on the neck of a bottle or other vessel having an annular abutment surface formed thereon and for containing a gift item consists of first and second wall sections (12, 14) which are fixed together to form a generally closed space containing the gift item. One of the wall sections (14) has formed in it an opening (17) having around its periphery a plurality of elongate resilient fingers (18) projecting into the interior of the container. The fingers (18) together define a substantially frusto-conical structure such that when the neck of the bottle or other vessel is inserted into the container (10) through the opening (17) the fingers (18) are forced apart to allow passage of the neck until they have moved over the abutment surface formed on it. The ends of the plurality of fingers (18) engaged with the abutment surface to oppose movement of the neck of the bottle or other vessel out of the container. The container thus provides a secure means for securing a gift item to the neck of the bottle or other vessel as part of a promotional exercise.



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ATTACHMENT FOR BOTTLE NECK

The present invention relates to a container, in particular, to a container for mounting on the neck of a bottle or other vessel having an annular abutment surface formed thereon.

5 As a promotional measure, it has become increasingly common to offer gifts as an incentive to purchasers of products of various kinds, including those supplied in bottles, for example, beverages and other liquid products. Where the main purchase is supplied in a bottle, difficulty arises in finding a suitable means of mounting the container or package containing the gift on the bottle. If the gift is
10 secured to the body of the bottle, the overall circumference of the item is increased, making it more difficult to fit an appropriate number of bottles on a shelf for display to purchasers. Whatever part of the bottle the gift is secured to, there is difficulty in securing it so that it simply cannot be removed and taken away without having been paid for.

15 In accordance with the invention, there is provided a container characterised in that it comprises a wall which defines a generally closed space; there being formed in the wall an opening for receiving the neck of said bottle or other vessel; the container further comprising a resilient retaining structure having an aperture which is aligned with the opening in the container wall and is of
20 dimensions selected to be slightly smaller than those of the annular abutment surface on the neck of the bottle, the said structure being such that when the neck of a bottle or other vessel is inserted into the container through the opening in the wall thereof, an end portion of the said neck can be forced through the aperture of the retaining structure due to the resilient nature thereof, a lip of the
25 said structure around the aperture therein engaging with the abutment surface to oppose movement of the neck of the bottle or other vessel out of the container and the neck of the bottle serving to close the container so as to prevent removal of the contents of the container through the said opening.

Since the neck of the bottle closes the container, the gift, or other content, cannot easily be removed. Furthermore, the retaining means prevents removal of the container from the neck of the bottle. To remove the gift from the container or the container from the bottle, the container must essentially be destroyed,
5 making theft of the gift difficult.

In a preferred embodiment the wall of the container and the retaining means are of vacuum formed sheet material, for example, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), and the wall sections which make up the wall of the container are secured together by welding. Such a construction is very robust and needs considerable force to
10 remove the resulting container from the bottle or to break open the container to remove its contents.

Embodiments of the invention will now be described in detail, by way of example, with reference to the drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is an exploded view of a first container in accordance with the
15 invention;

Figure 2 is a view of the container of Figure 1, fully assembled;

Figure 3 shows the container of Figure 1 in position on the neck of a
bottle;

Figure 4 is a sectional view of a second container in accordance with the
20 invention;

Figure 5 is a sectional view of a third container in accordance with the
invention;

Figure 6 is a sectional view of a fourth container in accordance with the
invention;

Figure 7 is an exploded perspective view of a fifth container in
25 accordance with the invention; and

Figure 8 shows the container of Figure 7 mounted on the necks of a pair
of bottles.

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The container 10 shown in Figures 1 to 3 of the drawings is of three part construction, comprising two box-like wall sections 12 and 14 of plastics material and a generally conical insert 16, which acts a retaining means to retain the container on the neck of a bottle or the like as will be described below.

5 The upper most box-like section 12 is an inverted, hollow body with an outwardly projecting flange 11 formed around the periphery of its free edge. As shown in the drawings, the box-like section 12 is generally rectangular or square but this shape is chosen purely for ease of accommodating a plurality of such containers contiguous to one another and other shapes may be chosen according
10 to taste.

In the centre of the face 13 of the box-like section 12 remote from the flange 11 is a generally cylindrical protrusion which contains a similarly shaped recess 15, accessible from within the box-like wall section 12.

The other box-like wall section 14 is of a similar overall shape to the first, save
15 that, in place of the cylindrical protrusion containing the recess 15 there is an opening 17 around which is positioned a generally frusto-conical skirt 19 which projects into the interior of the box-like section 14. The box-like section 14 is provided with an outwardly projecting flange 21 which is similar to that provided on the section 12.

20 Both box-like sections are preferably formed of thin semi-rigid plastics material, for example, of vacuum-formed PVC (polyvinyl chloride).

The insert 16 is generally frusto-conical with a semi-vertical angle similar to that of the skirt 19 formed around the opening in the second box-like section 14. It has an outwardly extending flange 20 at its wider end and the narrower
25 portion of the insert 16 is divided to define a plurality of finger-like ridges separated by moulded grooves to give an overall corrugated effect. These

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corrugations serve to strengthen the insert 16 to reduce the likelihood of the insert being damaged or deformed to permit removal of the container from the bottle on which it is to be mounted. Ideally the insert 16 is made by vacuum forming a suitable material, for example, PVC. At its innermost end, the insert
5 16 has an opening or aperture 18 which is chosen to be of slightly smaller dimension than the annular abutment surface on the neck of a bottle on which the container is intended to fit.

The container 10 is assembled as follows.

The insert 16 is positioned in the second box-like section 14, over the frusto-
10 conical skirt 19 which helps to support it. The flange 20 on the insert 16 is secured to the box-like section 14 by, for example, frequency welding. The gift (not shown) which is to be held in the container 10 is positioned within the box-like section 14 in the space between the insert 16 and the outer wall of the box-like section and the container 10 is then closed by positioning the other box-like
15 section 12 so that its outwardly projecting flange 11 abuts the flange 21 on the section 14. The flanges 11 and 21 are secured to one another by frequency welding or any other suitable technique to close the container 10.

If desired, a printed insert 30, of cardboard or the like, bearing advertising or promotional information may be added before the two box-like sections are
20 brought together to close the container 10.

It will be appreciated that at this stage the container 10, with its enclosed gift item forms a sealed unit which is largely tamper-proof; the gift item cannot be removed from the container without breaking the welded joints of the container 10 or, alternatively, cutting through the plastics material of which the container
25 10 is formed.

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The container 10 can then be mounted on the neck of a bottle or like container with a relatively narrow neck, as shown in Figure 3, simply by inserting the neck of the bottle 40 into the container through the opening 17 formed in the box-like section 14. The bottle neck 40 passes through the opening 17 and the skirt 19, and as it continues to move into the interior of the container 10 it deforms the insert 16, which surrounds the opening 17, pushing through the narrower opening 18 at the innermost end of the conical insert 16. The insert 16 may simply be sufficiently elastic to allow it to stretch over the annular abutment surface on the bottle-neck or, alternatively, if the insert 16 is of less elastic material, then the corrugations may flatten out to increase the diameter of the innermost opening 18 temporarily to allow passage of the annular abutment.

The closed end of the bottle neck 40 is finally located in the recess 15 formed within the cylindrical protrusion on the box-like section 12, so that the container 10 is held relatively securely on the neck of the bottle and is not able to tilt relative to the bottle neck.

The insert 16 is chosen to be of such a length that, in this position, with the end of the neck of the bottle 40 within the recess 15, the free edge of the insert around the opening 18 abuts the annular underside of the moulded ring 42 usually found around the open end of a bottle neck to which the bottle cap is secured. The edge of the insert 16 is brought into this position by the natural resilience of the material of which it is made which causes the insert 16 to return to its original unstressed condition and, hence, to be urged inwards.

Any attempt to remove the container 10 from the neck of the bottle 40 forces the edge of the insert around the opening 18 against the underside of the moulded ring 42, opposing movement of the container 10 off the neck of the bottle.40. In practice, it is very difficult, if not virtually impossible, because of the strength of the plastics material used, to remove the container and its contents.

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The container shown in Figures 1 to 3 of the drawings has the retaining structure formed by the insert 16 mounted on the periphery of the container wall around the opening 17 into the container 10. However, the precise construction of the container, the positioning of the retaining structure and its dimensions may be chosen to accommodate bottles of any number of different configurations. The containers illustrated in Figures 4 to 6 show examples of containers 410, 510 and 610 adapted to accommodate bottles having necks of different shapes. (The views shown in Figures 4 to 6 are analogous to one another and, for ease of understanding like parts have been given like reference numerals, differentiated by the first digit which refers to the number of the figure.)

The container shown in Figure 4 is similar to that of Figures 1 to 3 in that the retaining structure 416 is positioned on the wall of the container 410 immediately surrounding the opening 417. However, the insert 416 which forms the retaining structure is different in shape to that of figures 1 to 3, being generally cylindrical apart from a short conical section immediately adjacent the innermost opening 418. The insert 416 is also considerably shorter in an axial direction than that of Figures 1 to 3 since the container of Figure 4 is intended to accommodate a bottle having the annular abutment surface on its neck, which is, in use, engaged by the edge of the insert 416 around the opening 418, spaced from the top of the bottle neck by a greater distance than would be the case in Figures 1 to 3.

In Figures 5 and 6 the containers 510 and 610 differ from those described above in that the retaining structure formed by the inserts 516 and 616 is secured to the wall of the container 510 and 610 at a position remote from and opposite to the opening 517 and 617 through which the neck of the bottle is to be inserted into the container. As shown in Figures 5 and 6, the retaining structures surround the cylindrical recesses 515 and 615 formed in the walls of the containers 510 and 610 which, in use, receive the top-most part of the bottle cap or cork and serve to steady the container against tipping or tilting.

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Although the retaining structures formed by the inserts 516 and 616 are differently positioned, they function in much the same way as the inserts 16 and 416 of Figures 1 to 4, with the free, innermost end of the insert around the inner opening 518 and 618 lodging beneath the annular abutment on the neck of the bottle.

It will be noted that the area of the container wall around the opening 517 and 617 in the containers of Figures 5 and 6 is curved to accommodate a bottle having a curved shoulder and to allow the container to sit firmly on the shoulder of such a bottle.

The containers 510 and 610 of Figures 5 and 6 differ from one another in that they are again intended to be used with bottles having differing separations between the top-most part of the bottle cap and cork and the annular abutment surface on the bottle neck. The container 610 of Figure 6 is intended to fit a bottle in which this separation is greater than that of the bottle which container 510 of Figure 5 will fit.

Figures 7 and 8 show a container 710 which is of quite different shape to the generally rectangular box-like shapes of the containers shown in Figures 1 to 6 and which, furthermore is intended to be fitted to the necks of a pair of bottles sold together as a single promotional unit. The container 710 of Figure 7 thus has the additional advantage that it may be used to secure bottles together in a permanent and easy-to-achieve manner.

Although the container 710 has two inserts 716 which are the same, it will be appreciated that by using different inserts, the container may be adapted to secure together bottles of different kinds.

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It will be understood that the invention provides a secure means for attaching a gift item to a bottle as part of a promotional exercise. The container of the invention, is cheap and easy to manufacture using conventional techniques. Further more, fitting of the containers on to the necks of bottles is an operation
5 which requires no particular skill and can be carried out at any point in the movement of bottles from the initial packaging of the bottles to placing the bottles on a shelf for retail display.

Whilst the invention has been described by reference to bottles with relatively narrow necks, it will be appreciated that the container of the invention may be
10 modified to fit any vessel or container having a suitable abutment surface for engagement by the retaining structure or structures.

CLAIMS

1. A container (10; 410;510;610;710) for mounting on the neck of a bottle or other vessel having an annular abutment surface formed thereon, the container being **characterised in that** it comprises a wall which defines a generally closed space; there being formed in the wall an opening (17; 417; 517; 617; 717) for receiving the neck of said bottle or other vessel; the container further comprising a resilient retaining structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) having an aperture (18; 418; 518; 618; 718) which is aligned with the opening (17; 417; 517; 617; 717) in the container wall and is of dimensions selected to be slightly smaller than those of the annular abutment surface on the neck of the bottle, the said structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) being such that when the neck of a bottle or other vessel is inserted into the container (10; 410; 510; 610; 710) through the opening (17; 417; 517; 617; 717) in the wall thereof, an end portion of the said neck can be forced through the aperture of the retaining structure due to the resilient nature thereof, a lip of the said structure around the aperture (18; 418; 518; 618; 718) therein engaging with the abutment surface to oppose movement of the neck of the bottle or other vessel out of the container and the neck of the bottle serving to close the container so as to prevent removal of the contents of the container through the said opening.
2. A container according to claim 1 wherein the said retaining structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) is disposed on the interior of the container wall around the opening (17; 417; 517; 617; 717) so that the opening defines an inlet into the retaining structure.
3. A container according to claim 1 wherein the retaining structure(16; 416; 516; 616; 716) is disposed on the interior of the container wall at a position remote from the opening (17; 417; 517; 617; 717) but aligned therewith.

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4. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the retaining structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) is of material sufficiently elastic to permit it to stretch temporarily to increase the size of the aperture (18; 418; 518; 618; 718) therein and, hence, to allow the annular abutment on the neck of the bottle to pass therethrough.

5. A container according to any preceding claim wherein the retaining structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) is formed of a continuous sleeve of material, the said sleeve having formed therein at least one longitudinally extending corrugation; the material of the sleeve being sufficiently resilient to allow, in use, the or each corrugation to deform temporarily to increase the size of the aperture (18; 418; 518; 618; 718) therein and, hence, to allow the annular abutment on the neck of the bottle to pass therethrough.

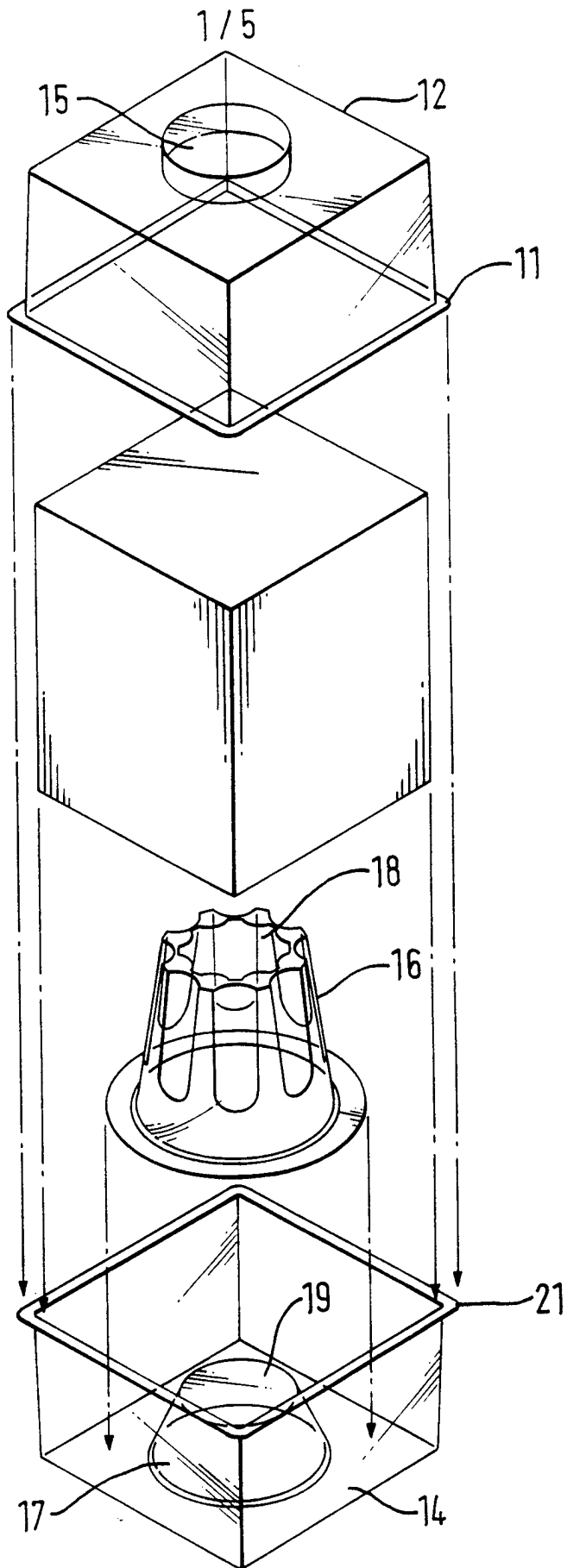
6. A container according to any preceding claim in which the retaining structure (16; 416; 516; 616; 716) is generally frusto-conical, tapering towards the aperture (18; 418; 518; 618; 718) therein so that the retaining structure, in use, guides the neck of the bottle into alignment with the aperture thereof.

7. A container according to any preceding claim in which said wall is formed of at least two wall sections fixed together by welding.

8. A container according to any preceding claim in which the retaining structure is of vacuum-formed sheet material.

9. A container according to any preceding claim having two or more openings formed in the wall thereof and two or more retaining structures, each of which is associated with a respective one of the openings, so that the container can be mounted on the necks of two or more bottles and serve to secure them together.

FIG. 1



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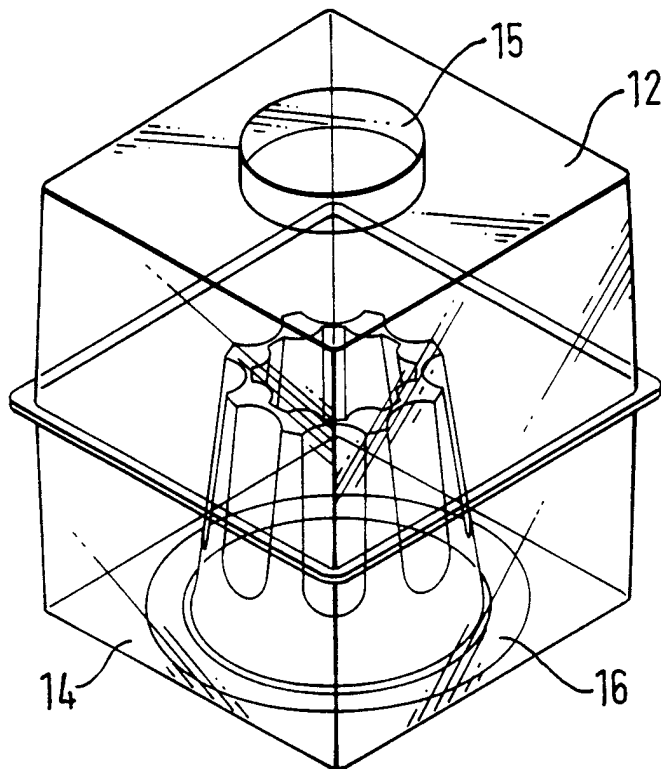


FIG. 2

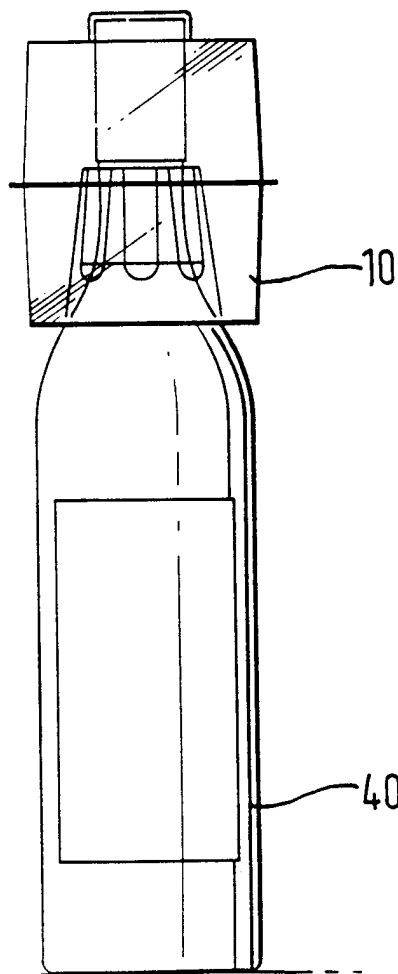


FIG. 3

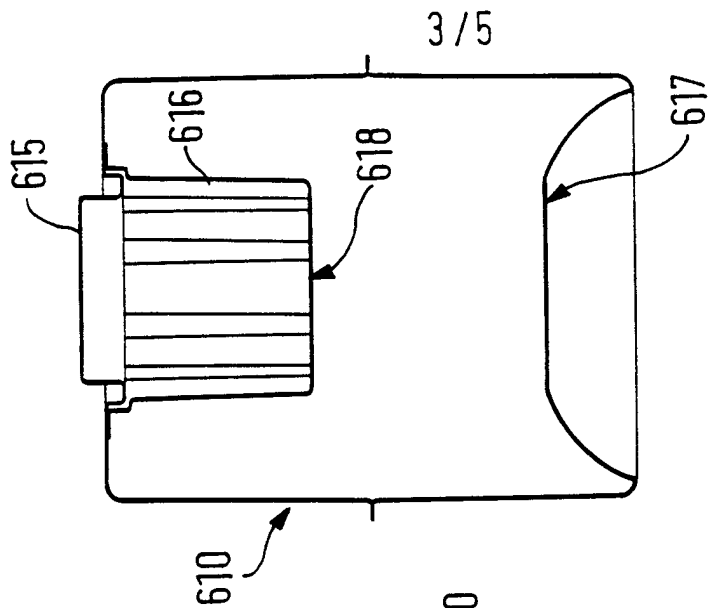


FIG. 6

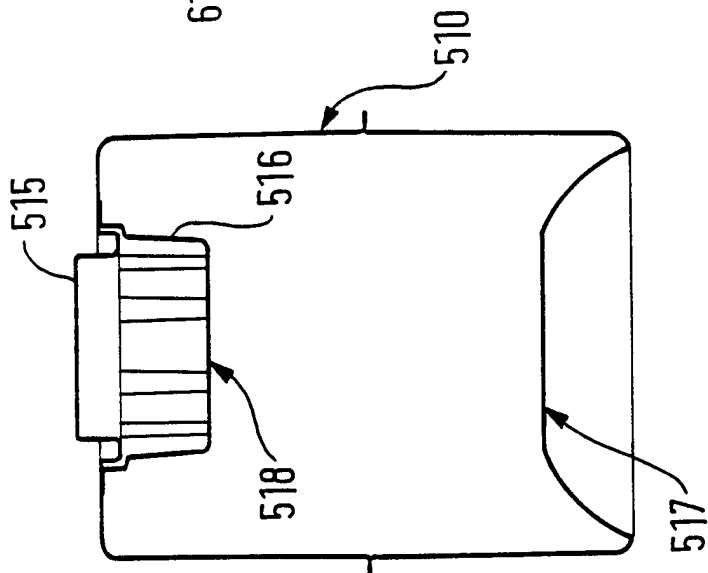


FIG. 5

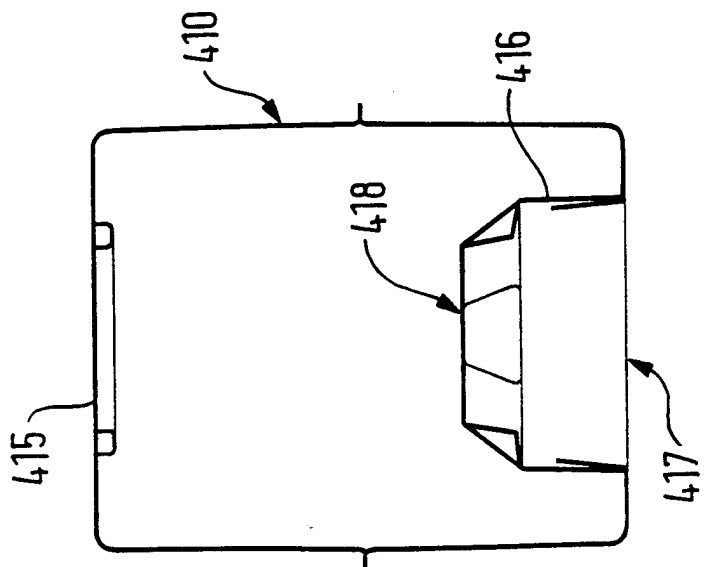


FIG. 4

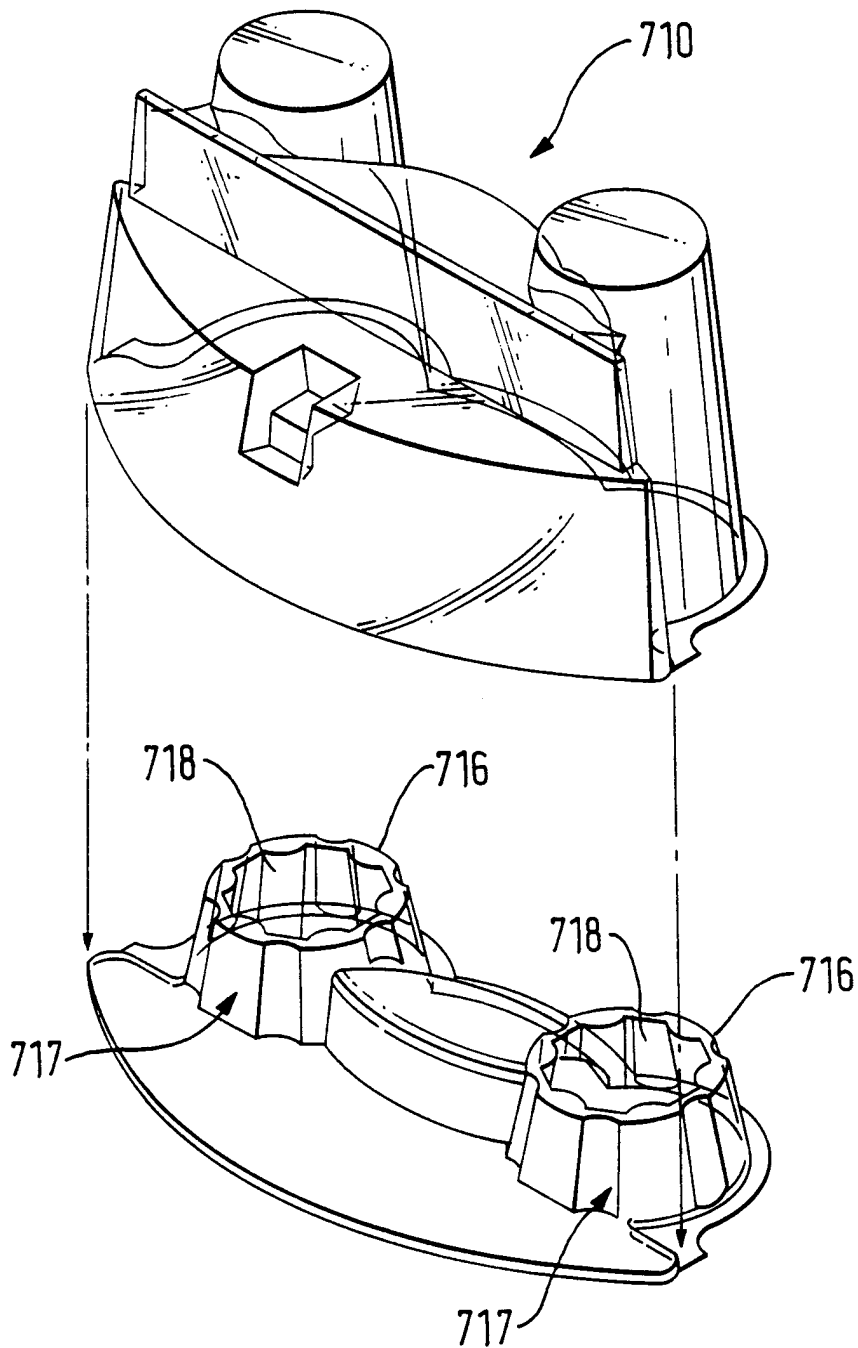


FIG. 7

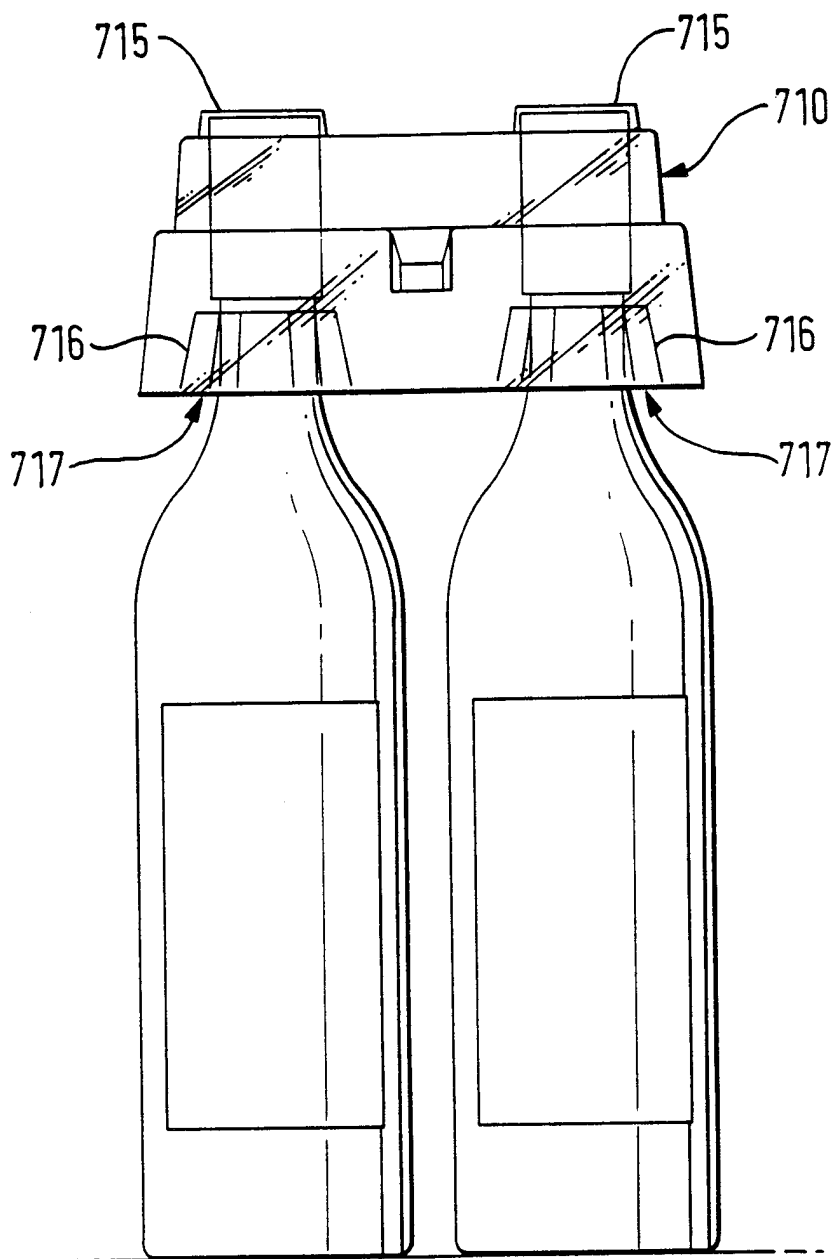


FIG. 8

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/GB 98/00370

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 B65D23/12

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC

B. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols)
IPC 6 B65D

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C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category °	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
A	GB 2 264 921 A (BOURBON COMMUNICATION) 15 September 1993 see the whole document ---	1-9
A	GB 2 289 455 A (STRANGWAYS ASSOCIATES) 22 November 1995 see the whole document ---	1-9
A	FR 2 690 138 A (BOURBON COMMUNICATION) 22 October 1993 see the whole document ---	1-9
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Date of the actual completion of the international search

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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No
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C.(Continuation) DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

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A	FR 2 615 490 A (F. JACOB S.A.) 25 November 1988 see the whole document -----	1-9
A	FR 2 704 209 A (BOURBON COMMUNICATION) 28 October 1994 see the whole document -----	1-9

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

International Application No

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