A terminal board (1) including a concave prismatic plate (2) delimiting a shallow recess (3) therein so as to define a generally flat cup-shaped body (4), a plurality of fasten-type blade contacts (5), and at least one ground connection (7) integrally carried by the plate, and cable-clamping means (10) for receiving one end of an electric cable, wherein a second end (15) of the plate, opposite to the first, is provided with seats (16), and a housing (21) delimited within the shallow recess by ribs (22,23) integrally obtained in one piece with the plate (2), and shaped to receive respective identical mounting portions (25) of both straight and L-shaped fasten contacts (5).
MODULAR TERMINAL BOARD FOR AN ELECTRIC HOUSEHOLD APPLIANCE

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to a modular terminal board for an electric household appliance capable, without changes, of being equipped with a plurality of different combinations of electric contacts.

BACKGROUND ART

It is known that in the field of terminal boards for electric household appliances, there is the increasing need to be able to fit different types of electric contacts on the electric household appliance, which may be of both the faston type for wiring the electric household appliance utilities, and of the type for fastening and connecting the power cable of the electric household appliance.

For example, either straight-type faston contacts for wiring the cables perpendicularly to the terminal board, or L-type faston contacts for wiring the cables parallelly to the terminal board may be needed, depending on the origin direction of the various cables; or screw contacts or spring-terminal contacts (named "screw-less" terminals) may be needed to wire the power cable. All this requires to mold terminal board bodies each time, which bodies made of synthetic plastic material so as to be electrically not conducting, with a different layout, with consequent high production costs and low standardization.
DISCLOSURE OF INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to drastically reduce these high costs by providing a highly standardized, modular terminal board which may indifferently carry, even on a same body, in combination with one another, all the main types of electric contacts of normal use in the electric household appliances, while preserving high assembly ease, small dimensions, high reliability and high production ease.

The present invention thus relates to a modular terminal board of an electric household appliance, as defined in claim 1.

In particular, the terminal board according to the invention comprises a concave prismatic plate, preferably rectangular in plan shape, delimiting a shallow recess therein so as to define a generally flat cup-shaped body, made of electrically non-conductive, synthetic plastic material. A plurality of faston-type blade contacts and at least one ground connection are integrally carried by the plate, as well as, in correspondence with a first end of the plate, cable-clamping means for receiving one end of an electric cable, while a second end of the plate, opposite to the first, is provided with contact-carrying seats.

According to one aspect of the invention, each of the latter comprises: a slot obtained through a bottom wall of the shallow recess and long enough to allow the passage of both straight faston contacts, having a connecting direction perpendicular to the shallow recess, and L-shaped faston contacts having a connecting direction parallel to the shallow recess; and a housing delimited within the shallow recess by ribs integrally obtained in one piece with the plate, and shaped to
receive respective mounting portions of both straight and L-shaped faston contacts.

The housing is provided with at least one snap-coupling tooth for a respective mounting portion and with first and second through windows obtained through a transversal rib delimiting the housings, facing the first end of the plate; the first window is arranged in a position immediately underneath the second window and closer to the bottom wall, and both are adapted to allow a same wire of the electric cable to pass in use towards the housing, the housing being further adapted to indiscriminately accommodate either a screw contact or a screw-less, elastic-terminal contact therein, over the respective mounting portion of the faston contact and in direct electric connection with the same.

According to a further aspect of the invention, the mounting portion of the faston contacts, in particular of at least the one(s) intended to receive an elastic-terminal contact, is then overhangingly provided with a fin which protrudes with a clearance within the first through window of the transversal rib; the fin is adapted to engage in use an undercut of the possible elastic-terminal contact.

Thereby, a same terminal board body may indifferently be equipped, either selectively or simultaneously, with different types of contact of either faston type for wiring the electric household appliance utilities, or screw or screw-less type for wiring the power cable. Furthermore, a body of small size is obtained, adapted to be mounted flushed with the casing of the electric household appliance, within a specific drilling template appropriately created in the casing itself.
BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Further features and advantages of the present invention will be apparent from the following description of two preferred embodiments thereof, merely provided by way of non-limitative example with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which:

- figure 1 shows an axonometric three-quarter top front view of a first embodiment of a modular terminal board according to the invention;

- figure 2 shows an identical axonometric view of a second embodiment of the modular terminal board according to the invention;

- figures 3 and 4, 5, 6 show an axonometric view on enlarged scale of a faston contact adapted to be assembled in the terminal board of the invention and a longitudinal section taken along plotting planes IV-IV or VI-VI of a same end thereof in three different possible embodiments of the contacts, respectively; and

- figures 7, 8 and 9 are axonometric views on enlarged scale and partially in section of the terminal board and contacts in figures 4, 5 and 6, respectively.

BEST MODE FOR CARRYING OUT THE INVENTION

With reference to figure 1, numeral 1a indicates as a whole a terminal board comprising a prismatic, concave plate 2, in this illustrated case being substantially rectangular in plan shape, delimiting a shallow recess 3 therein so as to define a generally flat cup-shaped body 4 as a whole; plate 2 is made of electrically non-conductive, synthetic plastic material and integrally carries a plurality of faston-type blade contacts 5 and at least one ground connection 7, as well as cable-
clamping means 10, of type generally well known in the art, for receiving in use one end 11 of an electric cable 12; the cable-clamping means 10 (known) are integrally carried by the plate 2 at a first end 14 thereof, while a second end 15 of plate 2, opposite to the first, is provided with contact-carrying seats 16.

According to one aspect of the invention, each of the latter comprises (figures 4 and 5): a slot 18 obtained through a bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3 and long enough to allow the passage of both straight faston contacts 5a (figure 4), having a connecting direction perpendicular to the shallow recess 3, and L-shaped faston contacts 5b (figure 5), having a connecting direction parallel to the shallow recess 3; and a housing 21 delimited within the shallow recess 3 by ribs 22,23 integrally obtained in one piece with plate 2, and shaped to receive respective mounting portions 25 of the faston contacts; in particular, each housing 21 is shaped so as to be adapted to selectively receive both mounting portions 25a of the straight-type faston contacts 5a, and mounting portions 25b of the L-shaped faston contacts 5b.

In particular, according to one aspect of the invention, each housing 21 is provided (figures 7, 8, 9) with at least one snap-coupling tooth 26 for a respective mounting portion 25a, 25b, which tooth is perpendicularly obtained in front of a first through window 27 made through a transversal rib 23 delimiting the housings 21 and facing the first end 14 of plate 2. Furthermore, according to the invention, the transversal rib 23 is also provided with a second through window 50 and the first window 27 is arranged in a position immediately underneath the second window and closer to
the bottom wall 20; both through windows 27 and 50 are further adapted to allow a same conducting wire 55 of the electric cable 12 to pass in use towards the housing 21 (figures 5 and 6).

Finally, according to the invention, each housing 21 is adapted to indiscriminately accommodate either a screw contact 30 or a screw-less, elastic-terminal contact 31 therein, over a respective faston contact 5 and in direct electric connection with the same, so as to obtain a terminal board 1a, such as the one shown in figure 1, or a terminal board according to the variant Ib in figure 2, where similar or identical details as those described for the terminal board 1a are indicated by the same numerals. Furthermore, an even different terminal board, as compared to the terminal boards 1a, Ib, equipped with both contacts 31 and contacts 32 may also be provided.

According to a further aspect of the invention, the mounting portion 25 of the faston contacts 5, in particular of at least one faston contact 5 intended to receive in use an elastic-terminal contact 32, is overhangingly provided (figures 8 and 9) with a fin 36, which protrudes with clearance within the through window 27 of the transversal rib 23/ said fin 36 is shaped and arranged so as to be adapted to engage in use an undercut 34 (figure 9) of the elastic-terminal contact 32 possibly arranged in the housing 21.

With reference to figure 3, a possible embodiment of a faston contact 5, in this case a straight-type contact 5a, is shown for a better understanding of the invention.

The mounting portion 25, in this illustrated case indicated as 25a, consists of a flat metal foil part 35
shaped by shearing and folded upon itself; in particular, the foil part 35 is shaped so as to form the fin 36 in one piece thereof and has an L-shaped fold 38, which laterally and overhangingly carries a pair of blade portions 40 defining the electric connection part of contact 5; an upper edge 41 of the portions 40 facing the foil part 35 but arranged at a certain distance therefrom, below the same, is adapted in use to engage the tooth 26 and possibly has a chamfer 42.

The through window 27 of each housing 21 is obtained in a position immediately underneath and by the side of the second through window 50; this is made through the transversal rib 23 so as to interrupt an upper edge 51 thereof (figures 7, 8, and 9), facing the opposite side of the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3; the through window 27 is, in turn, obtained so as to interrupt a lower edge 52 of the corresponding through window 50 adjacent thereto, facing the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3; thereby, both through windows 27 and 50 of each housing 21 are adapted to allow in use a terminal end of a wire 55 of the electric cable 12 engaged by the cable-clamping means 10 to pass towards a corresponding screw contact 31 or elastic-terminal contact 32, over (figure 5) or underneath (figure 6) the mounting portion 25, respectively.

Thereby, in use, the undercut 34 may clamp the end of a wire 55 between itself and fin 36, as will be described in greater detail below, after introducing the same into the housing 21 through the window 27, instead of the window 50.

Faston contacts 5, either of straight type 5a or L-shaped type 5b, externally and overhangingly protrude in use from a face 60 (figures 4, 5, 6) of the prismatic
plate 2 delimiting the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3 from the opposite side. Such a face 60 is perpendicularly and overhangingly provided with finnings 61 to keep the faston contacts 5 elastically apart from one another.

According to a further aspect of the invention, each slot 18 and the corresponding housing 21 of each contact-carrying seat 16 are shaped so that the slot 18 extends with a terminal end 70 thereof substantially to a terminal side wall 71 of the housing 21, facing and opposite to the first end 14 of plate 2. Housing 21 is further provided with first and second abutting ribs, 73 and 74 respectively, for the mounting portion 25 of a corresponding faston contact 5; in particular, portions 25b are longer and positioned so as to be inserted with one edge thereof perpendicularly folded to the bottom wall 20, and blocked between the ribs 73,74 themselves (figure 8), while the mounting portions 25a are shorter and leave rib 73 uncovered and free, thus cooperating only against rib 74 (figure 7).

Ribs 73,74 each extend perpendicular to the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3 and, longitudinally to the plate 2, parallel and by the side of at least the terminal end 70 of slot 18, spaced from each other over an extension direction of the slot 18, which is perpendicular to the transversal rib 23 delimiting the housings 21, so as to define an insertion seat for the mentioned edge of each portion 25b.

The prismatic plate 2, on the opposite side to the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3, is peripherally provided with a mounting flange 80 (figures 1 and 2) which may be coupled in use to a casing (not shown) of an electric household appliance provided with an
appropriate drilling template (not shown) adapted to accommodate the prismatic plate 2 substantially flushed; the latter is further preferably equipped with a lid 82 for plugging the shallow recess 3, carried hinged about the second end 15 of the prismatic plate 2 and which may be snap-coupled, in an obvious manner for a person skilled in the art, with the first end 14 of the same to at least partially cover the contact-carrying seats 16.

The ground connection 7 consists of a drilled fin 85 arranged parallelly to the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3 and flushed with the mounting flange 80; fin 85 is equipped with an L-shaped supporting leg 86 straddling a peripheral edge 87 of the prismatic plate 2 and within a cavity 88 of the peripheral mounting flange 80; the leg 86 is electrically connected with a faston contact 5 within one of the contact-carrying seats 16, in this case the one immediately adjacent thereto, in this case through the corresponding window 50, by the side of the same.

Each screw contact 31 comprises a threaded hole 90 (figures 3, 5, 7, 8) obtained through a flat part (in this case the foil part 35) of the mounting portion 25 of each faston contact 5 and a respective flat-head screw 91 coupled in the threaded hole 90.

On the other hand, each elastic-terminal contact 32 comprises (figures 6 and 9) a spring element defined by a fin 96 simply coupled resting on the flat part (in this case the foil part 35) of the mounting portion 25 of each faston contact 5 and abutting against the terminal wall 71; the fin 96 is substantially V-folded and one end 97 thereof (figure 9) is in turn L-folded towards the other end of the fin 96 and is shaped so as to define the undercut 34, e.g. as provided with a
laterally open, rectangular cavity 98.

In order to hold the fin 96 in place, in addition to cooperate in abutment with the terminal wall 71 on the side of the V-fold, it is engaged under the fin 36 by means of the undercut 34, which fin 36 is oriented so as to be opposite to the terminal wall 71, with the contacts 5 being mounted.

As already shown, under the flat part defined by the foil part 35, the mounting portion 25 of each faston contact 5 made so as to be used in the terminal board according to the invention, has edges 41 delimiting the contact 5 on the side facing the opposite side of the bottom wall 20 of the shallow recess 3, which are sufficiently apart from the flat part 35 to allow the same to be engaged in use below the tooth 26 (in this case the teeth 26, obtained in opposite pairs for each housing 21), as clearly shown in figures 7, 8, 9.

In use, the terminal boards 1a, 1b may be indiscriminately equipped either with all contacts 5a or 5b, or with a combination of contacts 5a and 5b. If the seats 16 are equipped with screw-less contacts 32, these are mounted with the fins 96 engaging fins 36, which cross them, by means of the cavities 98; fins 36 thus abut against the undercut defined by the lower edge 34 of the cavities 98, holding the fins 96 in the position shown in figure 9, where the end 97 of each fin 96 is in front of the corresponding window 27.

By pressing the fins 96 at the L-shaped fold thereof on the end 97 and towards the bottom wall 20, they bend at the V-shaped fold, making the undercut 32 move away from the abutment against fin 36, in this case moving it close to the bottom wall 20, while taking the cavity 98 to be completely in front of the window 27. At
this point, the wire 55 may thus be inserted into the housing 21 through window 27 and cavity 98, by ceasing the pressure on the fins 96, these then return towards the position in figure 9, pinching the wire 55 against the lower face of the mounting portion 25 and within the V-shaped compartment defined by fin 96.

On the other hand, in the case of contacts 31, the wire 55 is inserted into each housing 21 through the window 50, directly over the mounting portion 25, and is then clamped between the latter and the screw 91.
CLAIMS

1. A terminal board (1) comprising a concave prismatic plate (2) delimiting a shallow recess (3) therein so as to define a generally flat cup-shaped body (4), the plate being made of electrically non-conductive synthetic plastic material, a plurality of faston-type blade contacts (5), and at least one ground connection (7) integrally carried by the plate, and cable-clamping means (10) for receiving one end of an electric cable (12), integrally carried by the plate at a first end (14) thereof, wherein a second end (15) of the plate, opposite to the first, is provided with contact-carrying seats (16); characterized in that the each contact-carrying seat comprises: a slot (18) obtained through a bottom wall (20) of the shallow recess and long enough to allow the passage of both straight faston contacts (5a), having a connecting direction perpendicular to the shallow recess, and L-shaped faston contacts (5b), having a connecting direction parallel to the shallow recess; and a housing (21) delimited within the shallow recess by ribs (22,23) integrally in one piece obtained with the plate (2), and shaped to receive respective mounting portions (25) of both straight and L-shaped faston contacts; the housing (21) being provided with at least one snap-coupling tooth (26) for a respective mounting portion (25a, 25b) and with first and second through windows (27,50) obtained through a transversal rib (23) delimiting the housings, facing the first end of the plate; the first window (27) being arranged in a position immediately underneath the second window (50) and closer to the bottom wall (20) and both being adapted to allow a same wire (55) of the electric cable (12) to pass in use towards the housing (21), the housing (21) being further adapted to indiscriminately
accommodate a screw contact (31) or a screw-less, elastic-terminal contact (32) therein, over the respective mounting portion (25) of the faston contact (5) and in direct electric connection with the same.

2. A terminal board according to claim 1, characterized in that the mounting portion (25) of at least one said faston contact, specifically if intended to receive said elastic-terminal contact (32), is overhangingly provided with a fin (36) which protrudes with a clearance within said first through window (27) of the transversal rib (23); said fin (36) being adapted to engage in use an undercut (34) of the possible elastic-terminal contact (32).

3. A terminal board according to claim 1 or 2, characterized in that the first through window (27) of each housing is obtained in a position immediately underneath and by the side of the second through window (50), which is obtained through the transversal rib (23) so as to interrupt an upper edge (51) thereof, facing the opposite side with respect to the bottom wall of the shallow recess; the first through window (27) being obtained so as to interrupt a lower edge (52) of the second through window (50), facing the bottom wall (20) of the shallow recess.

4. A terminal board according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said faston contacts (5), both of the straight and L-shaped types, externally and overhangingly protrude in use from a face (60) of the prismatic plate (2) delimiting the bottom
wall (20) of said shallow recess from the opposite side; said face being perpendicularly and overhangingly provided with fins (61) to electrically keep the faston contacts separate from one another.

5. A terminal board according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that each said slot (18) and corresponding housing (21) of each said contact-carrying seat (16) are shaped so that the slot substantially extends with a terminal end thereof (70) to a terminal side wall (71) of the housing, facing and opposite to the first end (14) of the prismatic plate, the housing (21) being provided with first and second abutting ribs (73,74) for the mounting portion (25), which extend perpendicularly to the bottom wall (20), parallelly and by the side of at least said terminal end (70) of the slot, spaced from each other in an extending direction of the slot (18), which is perpendicular to said transversal rib (23) delimiting the housing.

6. A terminal board according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said prismatic plate (2), on the opposite side with respect to said bottom wall of the shallow recess (3), is peripherally provided with a mounting flange (80) which may be coupled in use to a casing of an electric household appliance provided with a drilling template adapted to accommodate, substantially flushed, the prismatic plate (2); and with a lid (82) for plugging the shallow recess, carried hinged about the second end (15) of the prismatic plate and which may be snap-coupled with the first end of the same to cover at least said contact-carrying seats (16).
7. A terminal board according to claim 6, characterized in that said ground connection (7) consists of a drilled fin (85) arranged parallelly to the bottom wall of the shallow recess and flushed with said mounting flange (80), equipped with an L-shaped supporting leg (86) straddling a peripheral edge (87) of the prismatic plate and within a cavity (88) of the peripheral mounting flange, which leg (86) is electrically connected to said faston contact (5) within one of the contact-carrying seats.

8. A terminal board according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that said each screw contact (31) comprises a threaded hole (90) obtained through a flat part (35) of the mounting portion (25) of each said faston contact and a respective flat-head screw (91) coupled in the threaded hole.

9. A terminal board according to any one of the preceding claims, characterized in that each said elastic-terminal contact (32) comprises a spring element defined by a substantially V-folded fin (96), an end (97) of which is in turn L-folded towards the other end of the fin and is shaped so as to define an undercut (34); which fin (96) is coupled on a flat part (35) of the mounting portion (25) of each said faston contact.

10. A terminal board according to claim 8 or 9, characterized in that below said flat part (35), the mounting portion (25) of each said faston contact has an edge (41) for delimiting the contact on the part facing
the opposite side with respect to the bottom wall (20) of the shallow recess, which edge (41) is sufficiently far from the flat part (35) to allow the same to be engaged in use below said at least one snap-coupling tooth (26) of each housing (21) of the contact-carrying seats.
INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International application No.
PCT/US 10/20863

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IP(8) - H01R 29/00 (2010.01)
USPC - 439/173

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)
IP(8) - H01R 29/00 (2010.01)
USPC - 439/173

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched
USPC - 439/173, 166, 217, 43

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practicable, search terms used)
PubWEST(PGPB,USPT,USOC,EPAB,JPAB); Google Scholar
Search Terms Used, terminal block/board, household appliance, cable, wire, fasten, screw, spring

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

<table>
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<td>US 7,040,924 B2 (Droesbeke et al.) 09 May 2006 (09.05.2006) , FIG. 10</td>
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<td>A</td>
<td>FR 2687018 (Bassi) 6 August 1993 (06.08.1993)</td>
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Further documents are listed in the continuation of Box C.

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Date of the actual completion of the international search
04 March 2010 (04.03.2010)

Date of mailing of the international search report
23 MAR 2010

Name and mailing address of the ISA/US
Mail Stop PCT, Attn: ISA/US, Commissioner for Patents
P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, Virginia 22313-1450
Facsimile No. 571-273-3201

Authorized officer:
Lee W. Young
PCT Helpdesk 571-272-4300
PCTODS 571-272-7776

Form PCT/ISA/210 (second sheet) (July 2009)
**INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT**

<table>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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**Remark on Protest**

- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest and, where applicable, the payment of a protest fee
- The additional search fees were accompanied by the applicant's protest but the applicable protest fee was not paid within the time limit specified in the invitation
- No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees

Form PCT/ISA/210 (continuation of first sheet (2)) (July 2009)