ABSTRACT

A luggage bag (1) comprising opposed top (2) and bottom (3) ends with opposing front (5) and back (4) panels extending therebetween and roller means (8) provided only on the bottom (3) end, proximate to the back panel (4). The roller means (8) having a single axis of rotation which is parallel to the leading edge of the back panel, and at least one substantially rigid retractable towing pole (11) which is moveable between a retracted position in which it is retracted into the bag so as to lie proximate and substantially parallel to one side of the bag, and an extended position in which it extends from the top end of the bag. The towing pole (11) having a handle (11a) proximate to its end which, in the extended position, is remote from the bag, said handle (11a) being offset from the centre-line of the back panel (4).
FIGURE 3
LUGGAGE WITH TOW HANDLE

[0001] The present invention relates to luggage having tow handles.

[0002] It is well known in the art for items of luggage such as suitcases, carry on bags and the like to have wheels on the back edge of the lower end and to have a stowable handle by means of which the user can tilt the luggage onto the wheels and tow it along behind him, thereby avoiding the need to carry the luggage or put it on a trolley. Such luggage known in the art typically has a telescopically retractable tow handle formed by a pair of struts which extend from the top of the luggage and a cross bar which extends between the ends of the struts remote from the bottom of the luggage. The struts are located symmetrically on opposing sides of the centre line of the luggage and are telescopically retractable into associated housings which are formed on the inner surface of the bottom side of the luggage so that the cross bar can be retracted to a storage position lying substantially flush with the upper end of the luggage.

[0003] Such prior art systems have the drawback, however, that since the user tows the luggage from the middle, it will at least partially overlap the line of his feet as he walks with the luggage behind him, and this often results in the luggage hitting the back of the users feet unless the user shortens his stride. Furthermore, the housings for the struts interrupt the otherwise flat surface of the bottom side of the inside of the luggage, meaning that larger folded items of clothing such as shirts and the like cannot be laid flat and hence need re-ironing once removed from the luggage, no matter how carefully they are laid therein.

[0004] According to the present invention there is provided a luggage bag comprising opposed top and bottom ends with opposing front and back panels extending therebetween, roller means provided only on the bottom end, proximate to the back panel, the roller means having a single axis of rotation which is parallel to the leading edge of the back panel, and at least one substantially rigid retractable towing pole, which is moveable between a retracted position in which it is retracted into the bag so as to lie proximate and substantially parallel to one side of the bag and an extended position in which it extends from the top end of the bag, the towing pole having a handle proximate to its ends which is the extended part, said handle which is remote from the bag being offset from the centreline of the back panel.

[0005] Another aspect of the present invention provides a trolley for a bag having opposed top and bottom surfaces, a top surface on which, in use, is mountable a bag, fastening means for securing the bag, in use, on the top surface, roller means provided only on the bottom surface and having one common axis and a retractable towing pole which extends from the bottom of the trolley, by means of which a user can pivot the trolley about the axis of the wheels and then move the trolley, said pole being located proximate to one side of the trolley and having a handle proximate to the top end, said handle being offset from the centreline of the back panel.

[0006] A luggage bag in accordance with the invention has the advantage that the towing pole, when retracted, is stored in the bag away from the centreline of the back panel close to if not immediately adjacent to a side thereof, thereby providing a much larger flat area in the bag for the user to lay their items of clothing. As a result, it is easier to stack clothes in a uniform manner, and in particular larger items can be packed so as to avoid becoming creased as in the case of the prior art designs. Furthermore, the location of the handle close to one side of the bag means that the user can hold it, when towing, in just one hand with the bag off to his side, thereby clearing the area behind his or her feet so that full strides can be taken without risk of hitting the bag with the back of the feet.

[0007] Furthermore, the system of the invention offers a significant reduction in weight compared with prior art systems, thereby increasing the available weight to the user. Also, the handle configuration makes it easier to retract and extend compared with prior art systems as there is no imbalance created by having two parallel poles which must move simultaneously.

[0008] The towing pole may be telescopically or foldably moveable from its extended to its retracted positions and may advantageously be provided with a grip or handle on the upper end for grasping by the operator in use. In particular, the upper end of the towing pole may have provided thereon a pivot grip or handle which is moveable from a storage position in which it is substantially co-linear with the pole and a use position in which it extends at an angle, in particular perpendicular to the axis of the pole. In another embodiment, the end of the pole is simply curved over into a grip or handle, the grip or handle being received in a complementary shaped recess in the top of the bag when the pole is in its retracted position.

[0009] The bag may be provided with just a single pole and handle located proximate to either the left or the right side thereof so as to provide two versions—one for left handed people and one for right handed people. In another embodiment, however, two separate poles are provided, proximate to each side, which are separately moveable between the retracted and the extended positions so that the user can use the bag in either left handed or right handed mode. In a further development, a cross bar may also be provided which is positionable to extend between the two separate poles if both are extended together so as to enable the bag to be used in a conventional, centre-pull manner. The cross bar may be pivotally attached to one pole so that it can be aligned with the axis thereof for storage with said pole, may be detachable from both poles so as to be separately stored to the poles, or may be formed in two parts, one part pivotally attached to each pole and joining together in the middle.

[0010] The or each pole and handle, in one embodiment, extends from the top of the back side of the bag proximate to, in particular immediately adjacent to one side edge thereof. In another arrangement, however, the or each pole extends from the left or right side panel of the bag, parallel to and spaced apart from the bottom edge thereof.

[0011] The or each pole and handle may be straight or may be curved longitudinally so that it arcs outwards as it is extended, either beyond the back of the bag, the proximate side thereof or the like. The or each pole may also retract to be stored across the face of the left or right side panel in a non-parallel fashion or retract to be stored substantially parallel to one side edge of the left or right side panel. Advantageously the housing associated with the pole may be substantially straight or longitudinally curved accordingly.

[0012] Other advantages of the invention are that the case can be pushed along in front of a person as the offset position of the handle makes it very comfortable to do this, requiring just one hand for operation.

[0013] The case can be made of any conventional suitcase or luggage material such as polyester, ABS, polypropylene
etc., regardless of whether it has a zip closure for the top, combination locks, clips or any other conventional system.

Another advantage of the invention is that when cases are loaded and unloaded they always seem to fall onto the broader side of the case, and as the towing handle is located at the side of the case, it is much better protected from damage if the case is mishandled.

In order that the invention may be well understood, there will now be described some embodiments thereof, given by way of example, reference being made to the accompanying drawings, in which:

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a first embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 2 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a second embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a third embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a fourth embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 5 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a fifth embodiment of the invention;

FIG. 6 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a sixth embodiment of the invention, and

FIG. 7 is a perspective view of a suitcase according to a seventh embodiment of the invention.

Referring first to FIG. 1, there is shown a suitcase 1 having a top 2, a bottom 3, a back 4, a front 5 and opposing sides 6, 7. The suitcase has a pair of wheels 8 located at either side of the bottom of the back 4 onto which the case can be tilted so that it can be wheeled along. A channel 9 extends from the top 2 of the case longitudinally towards the bottom 3 in the corner of the case adjacent the bottom and one side, formed by a tube 10 attached to the inner surface of the bottom 3 so as to form a rib inside the case in the corner.

A pole 11 is housed within the channel 9 and is telescopically extendable therefrom to provide a handle by means of which the case can be tilted onto the wheels and then towed along. The upper end 11a of the pole 11 is bent over to form a handle 11b by which a user can grasp in one hand. The telescoping of the pole 11 out of the tube 10 is achieved in a conventional manner which will be well known to the person skilled in the art and further details will not, therefore, be given here.

FIG. 2 shows another suitcase 18 according to an alternative embodiment of the invention which is identical with that of FIG. 1 except that the tube 20 and hence the channel 19 formed thereby in which the pole 21 is housed is positioned in the side 16 of the case half way up rather than at the bottom 14. The enables the full area of the bottom 14 of the case to be used to store flat articles below the level of the tube 20. Although illustrated halfway up the side 6, it will be understood that the tube may be located away on the side of the case 18.

A third embodiment example of the invention is shown in FIG. 3, in which the case 28 is generally similar to that shown in FIG. 1, the top 29 being shown open to reveal how items can be stacked flat in the bottom of the case due to the offset location of the tow pole 30. This embodiment differs from that of FIG. 1 in that the pole 30 may be angled so that the handle 30a is offset from the channel 31 towards the middle of the case so as to facilitate the towing of the case.

FIGS. 4 to 6 show the invention applied to items of luggage other than suitcases, such as pilot style bags (FIG. 4), holdalls (FIG. 5) and backpacks (FIG. 6), the compact and lightweight configuration enabled by the invention enabling it practically to be applied to a much wider range of luggage items, and in particular to smaller bags than was practical with prior art systems.

FIG. 7 shows a still further embodiment in which tow pole 30 of the case 40 is curved so to offset the handle 30a towards the middle of the case if such a towing position is preferred by the user. Equally, it will be understood that the handle may be curved in any direction, such as to extend the handle forward of the bag. Also, instead of the handle 30a being formed by a folded over section of the pole 30, it is formed as a separate member which is pivotally attached to the end of the pole 30.

The removal of the central handle supported by a pair of poles in the invention does have the drawback that it eliminates the possibility of the user carrying another bag, such as a laptop bag, on the top of the case, held in place by wrapping a strap, such as the shoulder strap of the bag, around the handle. In the embodiment of FIG. 7, therefore, straps 32a, 32b or a quick release loop 37 having opening clips 37a for opening the loop, are provided on the front 33 of the case 40 which can be used to secure a smaller item of luggage such as a laptop bag 34 thereto. The straps 32a, 32b may be elastic or may have adjustable fasteners provided thereon. It will, of course, be understood that these are just two examples of suitable features which may be provided on the front of the case and that such features may be included in combination with any of the described embodiments.

Because the presence of an additional bag on the front 33 of the case 40 will move the centre of gravity forward, possibly leading to overbalancing and toppling over of the case when stood up, feet 35 are provided on the bottom 36 of the case 40 proximate to the front edge thereof which are sized so that the case 40 will tilt back slightly when stood on its bottom 36, thereby compensating for the additional weight of the extra bag.

It will be understood that whilst the invention has been described in connection with a handle which telescopically extends from the case, other means for making the handle extend may also be used within the scope of the invention, such as having the handle fold out from the channel etc.

1-18. (canceled)

19. A luggage bag comprising opposed top and bottom ends with opposing front and back panels and opposing side panels extending therebetween, roller means provided only on the bottom end, proximate to the back panel, the roller means having a single axis of rotation which is parallel to a bottom edge of the back panel, and at least one substantially rigid retractable towing pole which is moveable between a retracted position in which it is retracted into the bag so as to lie proximate and substantially parallel to one side panel of the bag, and an extended position in which it extends from the top end of the bag, the towing pole having a handle proximate to its end which, in the extended position, is remote from the bag, said handle being offset from the centreline of the back panel; characterised in that the retracted towing pole is located interiorly of the bag and adjacent an edge formed by the meeting of the back panel and the side panel.

20. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the towing pole is telescopically moveable between its extended and retracted positions.
21. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the towing pole is foldably moveable between its extended and retracted positions.

22. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the handle is a pivot handle which is moveable from a storage position in which it is substantially co-linear with the pole and a use position in which it extends at an angle, in particular perpendicularly to the axis of the pole.

23. A luggage bag according to claim 22, wherein the handle is formed by a curved section of the upper end of the pole and wherein a recess is formed in the top in which the handle locates when the pole is in its retracted position.

24. A luggage bag according to claim 19, having just a single pole which is located proximate to one side, such that, it is suitable for handed use only.

25. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein two separate poles are provided, one proximate to each side, which are separately moveable between retracted and extended positions thereby enabling both left handed or right handed use.

26. A luggage bag according to claim 25, further including a cross bar which is engageable between the two poles when both are extended.

27. A luggage bag according to claim 26, wherein the cross bar is pivotally attached to one pole for movement between a storage position in which it extends substantially parallel to the axis of said one pole and a use position in which it extends substantially perpendicular to the axis of said one pole.

28. A luggage bag according to claim 26, wherein the cross bar is detachable from both poles so as to be separately storable to the poles.

29. A luggage bag according to claim 26, wherein the cross bar is formed in two parts, each part being pivotally attached at one end to one of said poles and have fastening means on the other end for releasably connecting the two parts together.

30. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the or each pole extends from the top of the backside adjacent to one side edge thereof.

31. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the or each pole extends from one side, parallel to and spaced apart from the bottom edge thereof.

32. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the towing pole of the or each handle is substantially straight when extended.

33. A luggage bag according to claim 19, wherein the towing pole of the or each handle is curved longitudinally so that it arcs outwards as it is extended, either beyond the back of the bag, beyond the proximate side thereof or the like.

34. A trolley comprising opposed top and bottom surfaces and opposing sides, a bag being mountable, in use, on the top surface, fastening means for securing the bag, in use, on the top surface, roller means provided only on the bottom surface and having one common axis, and a retractable towing pole which extends from the bottom of the trolley, by means of which a user can pivot the trolley about the axis of the roller means and then move the trolley, said pole being located proximate to one side of the trolley and having a handle proximate to the top end, said handle being offset from the centreline of the trolley; characterised in that the retracted towing pole is located interiorly of the bag and adjacent an edge of the side panel.

35. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the towing pole is telescopically moveable between its extended and retracted positions.

36. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the towing pole is foldably moveable between its extended and retracted positions.

37. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the handle is a pivot handle which is moveable from a storage position in which it is substantially co-linear with the pole and a use position in which it extends at an angle, in particular perpendicularly to the axis of the pole.

38. A trolley according to claim 37, wherein the handle is formed by a curved section of the upper end of the pole and wherein a recess is formed in the top in which the handle locates when the pole is in its retracted position.

39. A trolley according to claim 34, having just a single pole which is located proximate to one side, such that, it is suitable for handed use only.

40. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein two separate poles are provided, one proximate to each side, which are separately moveable between retracted and extended positions thereby enabling both left handed or right handed use.

41. A trolley according to claim 40, further including a cross bar which is engageable between the two poles when both are extended.

42. A trolley according to claim 41, wherein the cross bar is pivotally attached to one pole for movement between a storage position in which it extends substantially parallel to the axis of said one pole and a use position in which it extends substantially perpendicular to the axis of said one pole.

43. A trolley according to claim 41, wherein the cross bar is detachable from both poles so as to be separately storable to the poles.

44. A trolley according to claim 41, wherein the cross bar is formed in two parts, each part being pivotally attached at one end to one of said poles and have fastening means on the other end for releasably connecting the two parts together.

45. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the or each pole extends from the top of the backside adjacent to one side edge thereof.

46. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the or each pole extends from one side, parallel to and spaced apart from the bottom edge thereof.

47. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the towing pole of the or each handle is substantially straight when extended.

48. A trolley according to claim 34, wherein the towing pole of the or each handle is curved longitudinally so that it arcs outwards as it is extended, either beyond the back of the bag, beyond the proximate side thereof or the like.

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