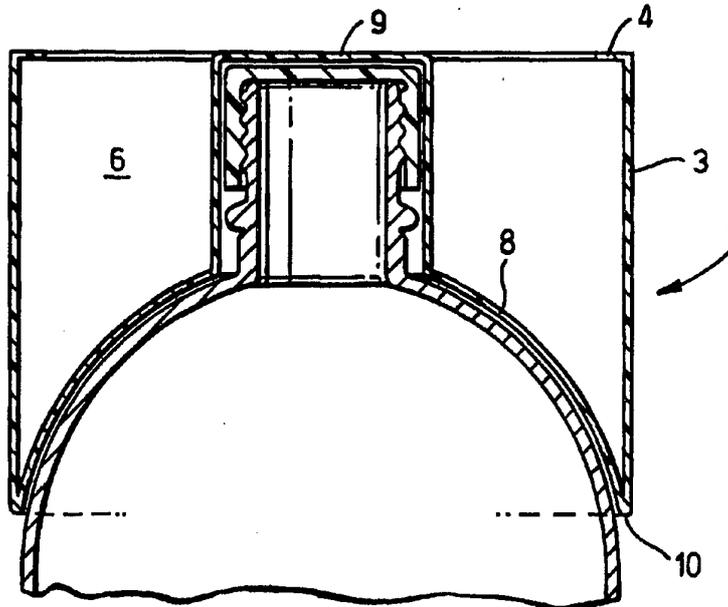




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(54) Title: CONTAINER



(57) Abstract

A container (1) is shaped to be positionable over the top of a bottle, to occupy at least a part of the space left void when bottles are crated or packed together on shelves. Such containers (1) are provided with an external shape adapted to receive an upper portion of a bottle. In preferred embodiments, the internal volume (6) of the container (1) which is available for the packaging of goods, is in a ring form positionable around the neck of the bottle. The otherwise wasted space left void between the upper parts e.g. the necks of bottles, may be put to use for the transport, storage and/or display of goods packaged within a container (1) according to the invention.

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CONTAINER

The present invention relates to a container shaped to be positionable over the top of a bottle.

5 When bottles are packed together on shelves or in crates for transport, there is a significant volume of unoccupied space between the bottles, especially where the bottles narrow to form a neck towards the mouth of the bottle.

10 The invention provides a container having an external shape adapted to receive an upper portion of a bottle.

 Preferably the container is shaped to be positionable upon a bottle such that, in a plan view, at least a part of the internal volume of the container occupies a space between the minimum cross-section and the maximum cross-section of the bottle. In this arrangement, at least a part of the space left void when the bottles are crated may be occupied by the container, 20 the internal volume of which is available for the packaging of goods. This otherwise wasted space may then be put to use for the transport, storage and/or display of goods packaged within the container.

Desirably, the maximum cross-section of the container does not exceed that of the bottle. This allows the packaging of bottles bearing containers according to the invention in conventional crates for the
5 bottles alone.

Preferably the container has inner and outer walls defining between them a space, the internal volume of the container, into which goods may be packaged. In this arrangement, at least the inner wall or walls may be
10 shaped such that, when the container is positioned on a bottle, they embrace the cap, part of the neck, or both the cap or neck of the bottle. In preferred embodiments the internal volume of the container is in a ring form positionable around the neck of a bottle. Such an
15 arrangement allows for efficient use of the otherwise wasted space around the bottle neck and gives lateral stability to the container when in position on a bottle.

In preferred embodiments, the outer periphery of the container, which is defined by one or more outer
20 walls, matches the shape of the outer periphery of a bottle. The outer periphery of the container can be shaped to contact the outer surface of the bottle on which the container is to be placed. If necessary, this

region of contact may extend around the entire periphery of the bottle. The region of contact may act as a site for attachment of the container and bottle, for example the container could be glued to the bottle at this point.

5 Alternatively or additionally a positive attachment of the container to be a bottle may be provided by a snap-fit of a resiliently deformable protrusion from the container over any raised area on e.g. the neck of the bottle.

10 The inner wall or walls of the container may be formed by indentation of the base of the container. This indentation may define a shape which fits over and around the cap of a bottle. In such embodiments, the outer wall or walls of the container may be the same height as the
15 internal walls, so that the internal volume of the container does not extend above the cap of a bottle positioned within the indentation defined by the inner walls. Alternatively, the outer periphery of the container may extend beyond the height of the inner
20 walls, so that the internal volume of the container lies both above and around the inner walls and, in use, above and around the cap and neck of a bottle.

Containers according to the invention may be

formed from any convenient materials, eg plastics materials, including those commonly used in the manufacture of plastic bottles, or from strengthened paper or card, metal or metallized foil, or other
5 suitable lightweight materials. The containers may be formed in one or more pieces by moulding, for example vacuum moulding of plastics materials, stamping, cutting or by other means. The pieces may be joined by heat welding, gluing etc. The containers may be closed with a
10 lid, seal or other suitable closure. Alternatively the lid and external walls may be formed together as a unit.

The internal and external walls of the containers according to the invention may be joined directly to one another, or may each be joined to a base
15 defining the lower limit of the internal volume of the container in which goods may be packaged. The base may be attached to the bottom or part way up the external walls. In one such embodiment, the external walls, base and internal walls form an annular trough which, in use,
20 is placed over the neck of a bottle so that the cap or cork of the bottle extends through the middle of the annulus.

In preferred embodiments, the internal walls of

the container are closed at the top. With this arrangement the internal walls form the shape of a cup or goblet-like vessel when the container is inverted. The liquid contained within a bottle with which a container is used may be then poured into this vessel.

Containers according to the invention may be used for packaging any kind of goods which it is desired to transport, display, store or sell in conjunction with bottles. Examples could be snack foods to be eaten with a drink contained in the bottle, party tricks or decorations which may be used by persons purchasing a bottled drink for a party, secondary drinks for use with a main drink in the bottle (for example spirits to be sold with a bottle of mixer drink), and so on. The container will be especially useful for the marketing of new products, as a small trial amount may be packaged within the container and sold in conjunction with an established product in the bottle.

The invention will now be further described, by way of example only, with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a container according to the invention;

Fig. 2 is a cross-sectional view of the container of Fig. 2 positioned on top of a bottle;

Fig. 3 is plan view of the container of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a cross-section of a second embodiment of the invention positioned on top of a bottle;

Fig. 5 is cross-sectional view of a third embodiment of the invention in position on top of a bottle; and

Fig. 6 is a cross-sectional view of a further embodiment of the invention in position on top of a bottle.

In the first embodiment, a container 1 has a cylindrical outer wall 3 bearing a return lip 4 at the top of the container 1. The internal volume 6 of the container 1, in which goods may be packaged, lies between the outer cylindrical wall 3 and an inner wall 8. The inner wall 8 conforms generally with the shape of the neck of a bottle over which the container is positioned in use. This inner wall 8 is closed by a top surface 9 which, in use, lies over the cap of the bottle. The container may be closed by a foil lid attached to the return lip 4. The heights of the outer wall 3 and the inner wall 8 are approximately equal.

When in position on the top of a bottle, the outer cylindrical wall 3 of the container 1 extends substantially vertically, continuing the cylinder formed by the walls of the bottle. The inner wall 8 sits over the neck of the bottle (Fig. 2). The return lip 4 and the top surface 9 lie approximately level with the top cap of the bottle. Thus the internal volume 6 of the container corresponds to space left void when bottles are crated.

10 The internal wall 8 and top surface 9 may be formed in one piece with the outer cylindrical wall 3, for example by vacuum forming over a suitably shaped mould. Alternatively, the outer cylindrical walls 3 and return lip 4 may be formed in one piece and later joined
15 by, for example, heat welding to a second piece comprising internal wall 8 and top surface 9 which themselves may be formed integrally or separately. Individual pieces may again be made by vacuum forming a suitable plastics material. When the container is formed
20 by moulding, either in one or several portions, the outer wall section may be formed with a slight taper to ease release from the mould. Conveniently, the lower end where the container will meet the bottle, may be of

slightly smaller diameter than the upper end of the outer wall.

The external cylindrical wall 3 may, in a second embodiment, extend further than the internal wall 8. The internal volume 6 of the container is thereby increased, and goods may be packaged both between the internal and external walls 8,3 and in the area above the top surface 9. Alternatively, the outer cylindrical wall 3 may not extend as far as the internal wall 8. In both these cases the container is again closed by a seal of foil or other suitable material secured to the return lip 4.

Fig. 4 shows an alternative embodiment in which the internal wall 8 is in the form of a cylinder to surround the cap or the top of the neck of a bottle and extends substantially horizontally to form a floor 12 for the internal volume 6 of the container. The floor 12 joins the cylindrical outer wall 3 at a junction 14. This join may be by heat welding. The cylindrical outer wall 3 extends beyond the floor 12 to come into contact with the surface of a bottle at its shoulder, or against its substantially vertical walls. This gives stability to the container as well as providing a convenient attachment site for the container 1 to the bottle.

In a third embodiment, the internal wall of the container is not closed by a top surface. In this arrangement, the neck and the cap of the bottle protrude through the container which rests on the shoulder of the bottle (Fig. 5). The internal walls, base and external walls are formed in a single annular trough-shaped unit 3, 12, 8. Both the internal and external walls have a return lip 4, 4' on which a foil or other suitable closure may be sealed.

10 In a further embodiment (Fig. 6a) the external walls 3 of the container are formed integrally with a lid 15, this unit being sealable to the inner walls 8 which are closed by a top surface 9 at their top and having a sealing lip 16 at their bottom edge. Sealing may occur 15 after filling in an inverted position (Fig. 6b).

To provide a positive attachment to a bottle, the above described embodiments can be provided with one or more resiliently deformable projections to give a snap-fit over any raised area on the neck or shoulder of 20 a bottle. For example, as shown in Figures 7 and 8 resiliently deformable indentations 20 in the inner wall 8 of a container 1 are formed to protrude from the container 1. These projections 20 are shaped to allow

the container to slide over the raised disc 30 (Fig. 8) commonly found on drinks bottles moulded from polyethylene terephthalate, but resist removal of the container.

6 further comprising a lip integral with at the least one
outer wall, wherein said lip is adapted to be
positionable in sealing cooperation with a container lid.

8. A container according to any one of claims 4 to
5 7 further comprising a lid integral with the at least one
outer wall.

9. A container according to any preceding claim
carrying a substantially annular internal volume and
being positionable around the neck of a bottle.

10 10. A container according to any preceding claim
wherein the outer periphery of the container matches the
shape of the outer periphery of a bottle.

11. A container according to any preceding claim
further comprising means to form a snap-fit attachment
15 with a bottle.

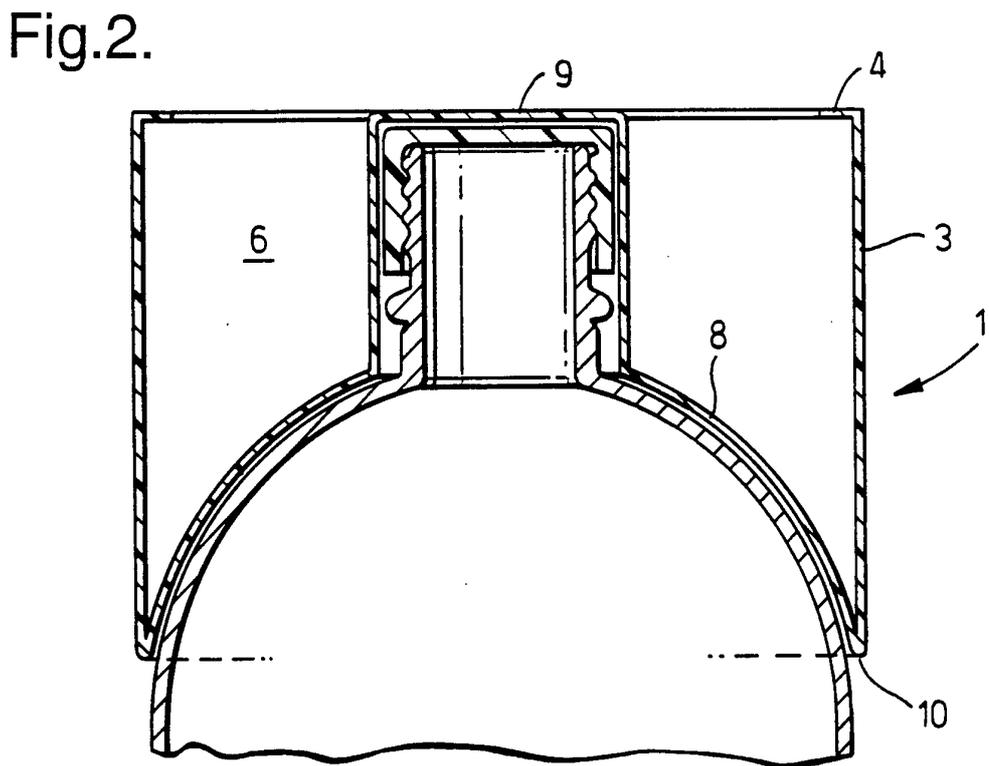
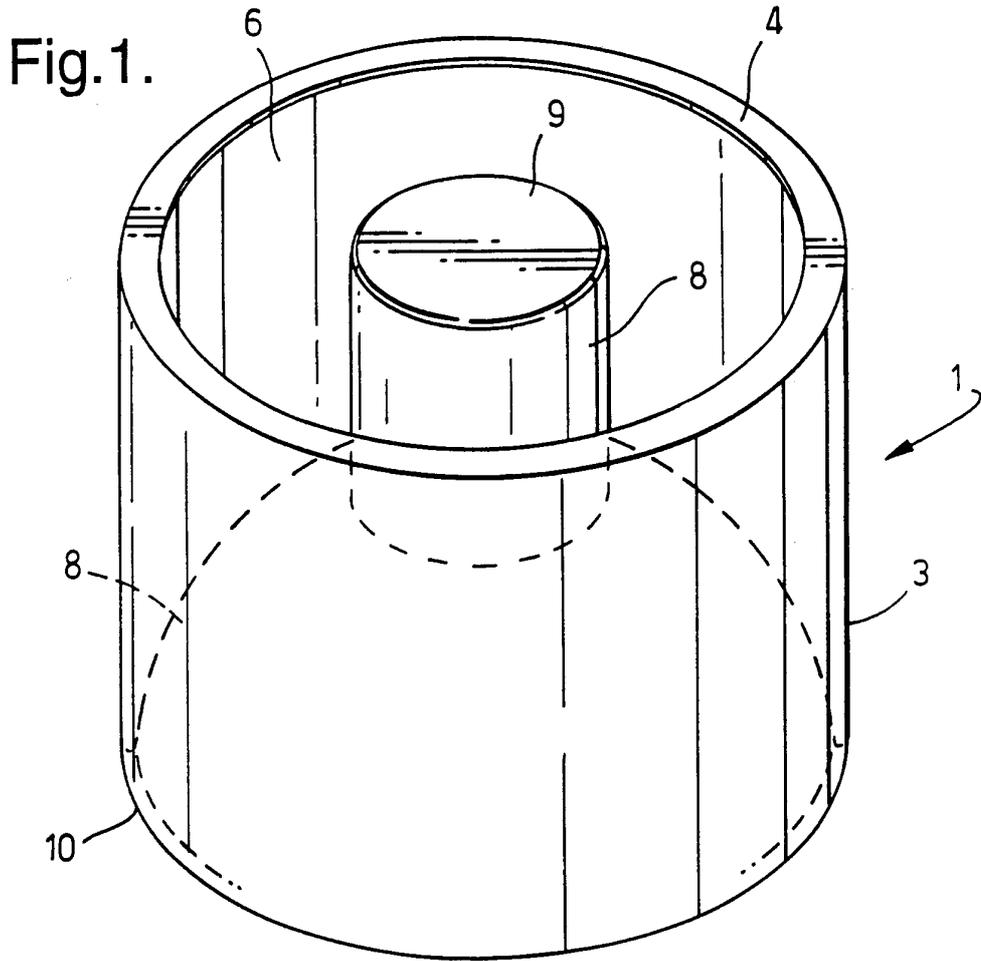


Fig.3.

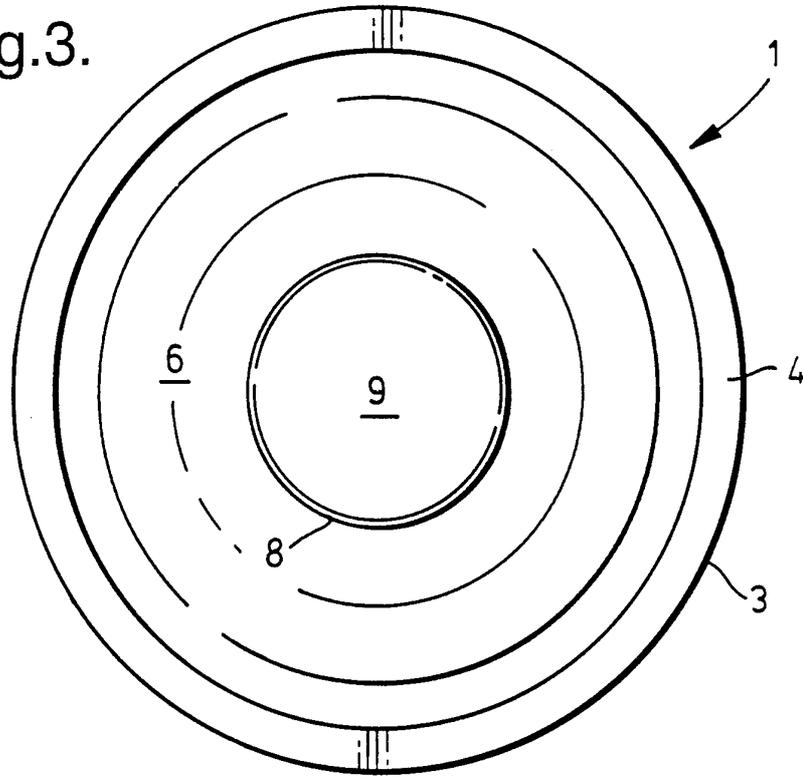


Fig.4.

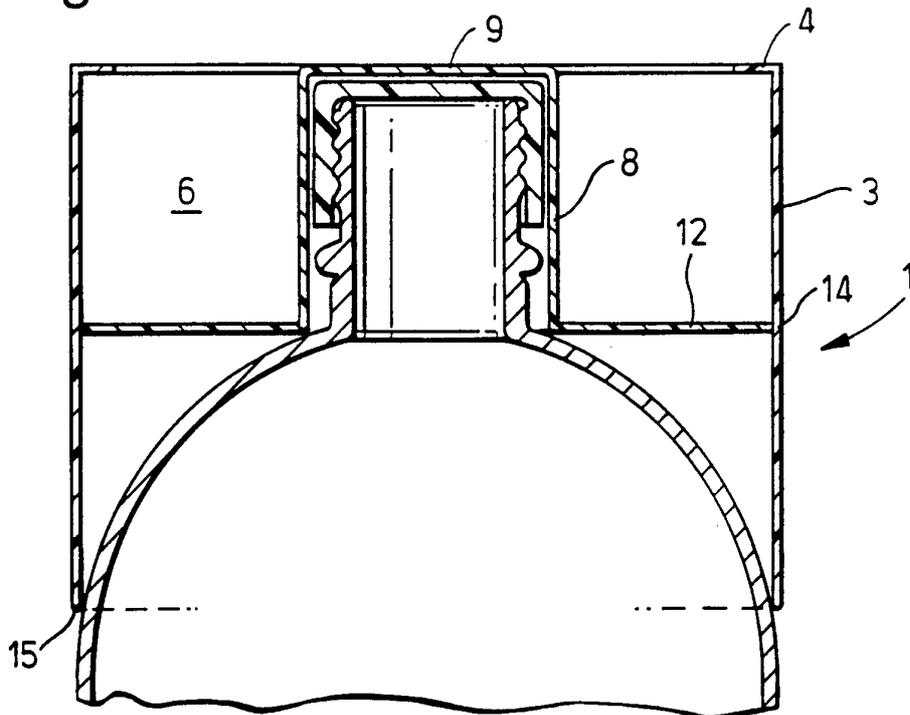


Fig.5.

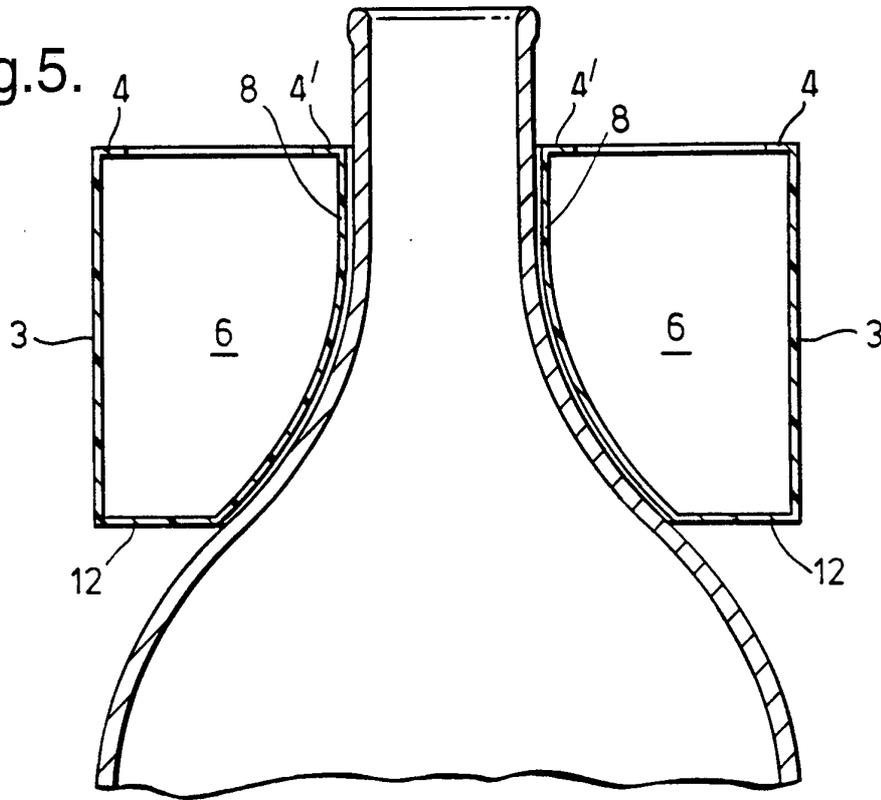


Fig.6a

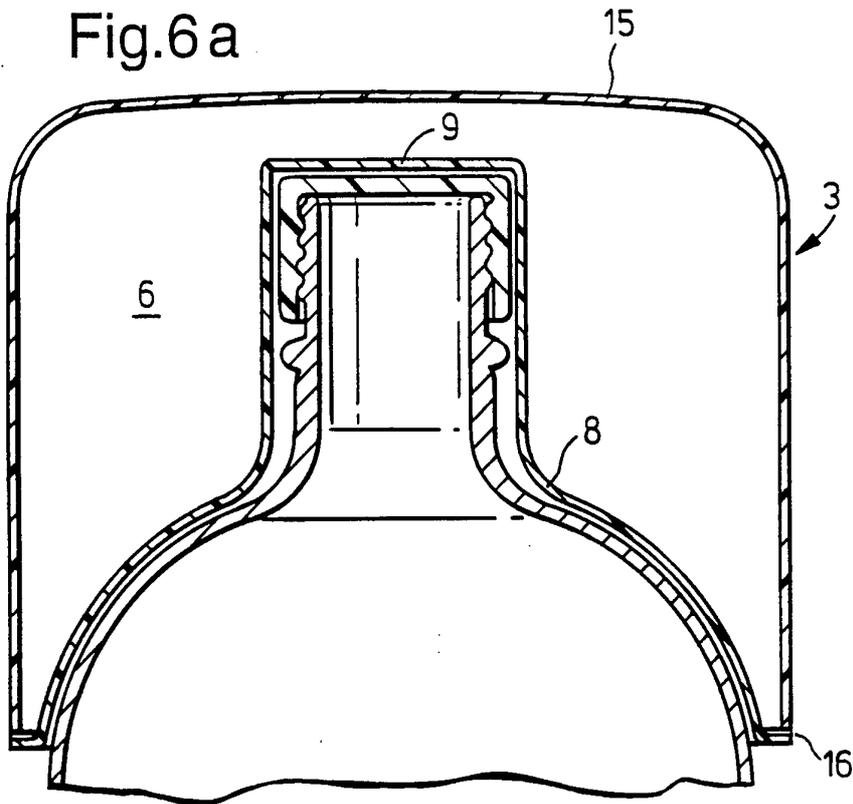


Fig.6b

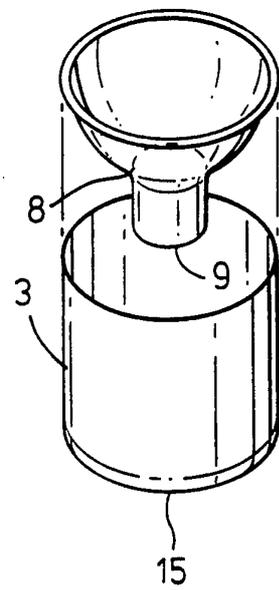


Fig.7.

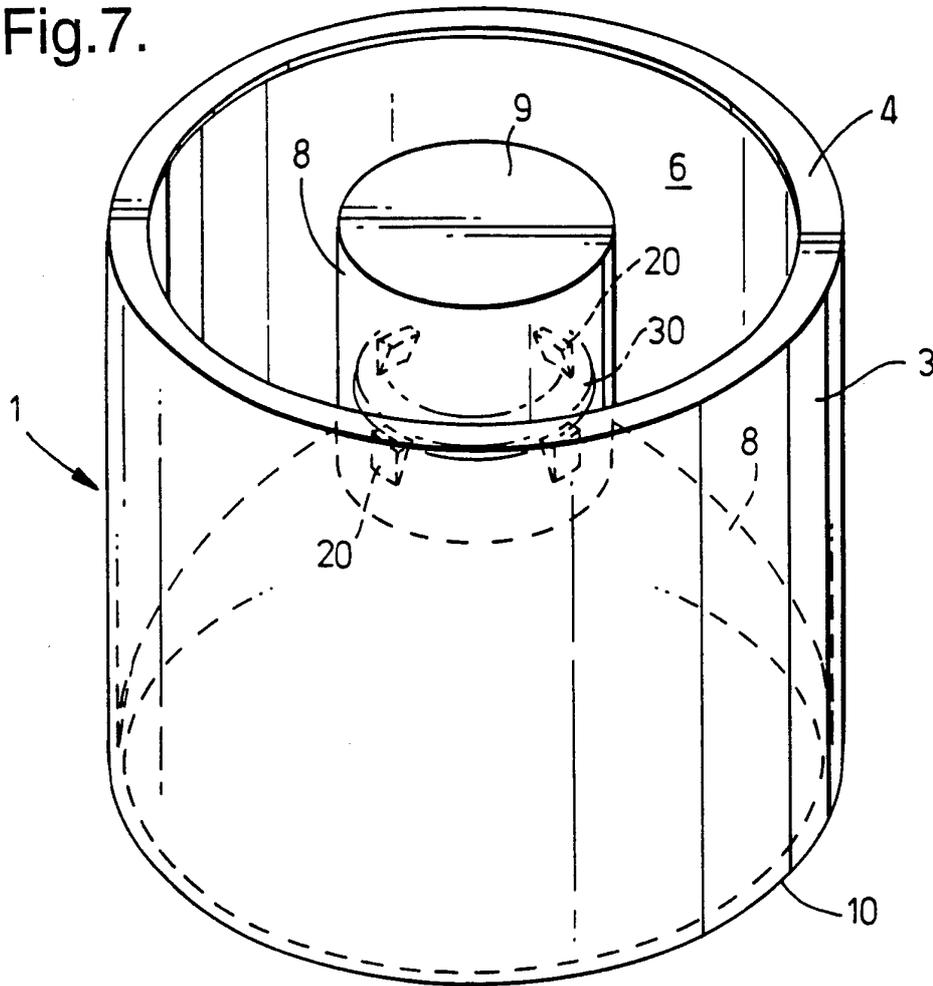
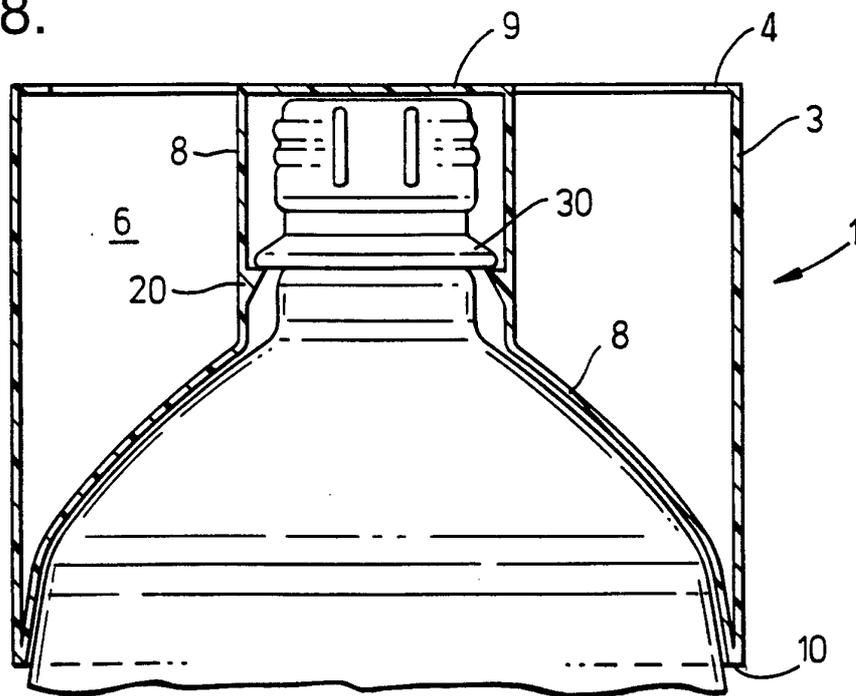


Fig.8.



INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Int. Appl. No.
PCT/GB 95/01477

A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER
IPC 6 B65D69/00

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

Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched

Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used)

C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT

Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	US,A,5 318 787 (BRAUNER) 7 June 1994 see column 3, line 28 - column 6, line 30; figures 1-9	1-7,9-11
X	---	
X	FR,A,1 405 131 (LAB. SAUTER) 24 May 1965 see column 3, line 10 - column 4, line 13; figures 1-9	1-5,9,10
X	---	
X	EP,A,0 201 376 (PROCTER & GAMBLE FRANCE) 12 November 1986 see page 8, line 12 - line 23; figures 2-4,13	1-3,11
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 3 October 1995	Date of mailing of the international search report 10. 10. 95
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INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

Information on patent family members

Int. l. Application No

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Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
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FR-A-1121209	24-07-56	NONE	