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(54) LIDDED CONTAINER

BEHÄLTER MIT DECKEL

RECIPIENT FERME PAR UN COUVERCLE

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EP 0 666 820 B1

Description

This invention relates to a lidded container which is adapted to deter and show evidence of tampering with its lid, thus to indicate whether or not a attempt has been made previously to open the container.

Arrangements are known for example in EP-A-0280488 in which a portion of the lid is frangible and has to be removed before the container can be opened, but in such an arrangement it is necessary to provide a portion which extends outwardly of the remainder of the container. Also, removal of the frangible portion does not facilitate removal of the lid from the base.

EP-A-0109265 discloses a container according the preamble to claim 1.

An object of the invention is to provide a new or improved lidded container which is adapted to indicate whether or not an attempt has been previously made to open the container.

According to one aspect of the present invention, we provide a lidded container comprising a base and a lid, each having inter-engageable formations which cooperate to retain the lid relative to the base, in a closed condition, a manually engageable member operable to facilitate disengagement between the inter-engageable formations of the lid and base, to permit the container to be opened, and the member being adapted to indicate when at least part of the member has been moved from an initial condition towards an operable position thus to indicate whether or not an attempt has previously been made to open the container, characterised in that the manually engageable member comprises a first part which is fixed relative to the lid, and a second part which is moveable relative to the first part and the lid from the initial condition to an intermediate position, the second part then being immovable back to the initial condition without it being apparent that the second part has previously been moved from the initial condition the first and second parts of the manually engageable member being integrally provided, there being a line of weakness about which the second part is moveable from the initial position, relative to the first part and the lid.

Thus a container is provided in which the manually engageable member performs both as a means for opening the container and a tamper indicating means.

The base may comprise a base wall and a peripheral wall, the peripheral wall having at or towards its uppermost end a lip, and the lid may comprise a corresponding inverted U-shaped channel engageable with the lip to enable the lid to be closed relative to the base.

Conveniently, the peripheral wall of the base includes a retention portion having a formation which when the lid is closed on the base, mechanically inter-engages with a corresponding formation provided on one of the limbs of the channel of the lid.

Preferably, the retention portion extends around substantially the entire periphery of the base.

For example, the upper part of the peripheral wall of the base may comprise a channel arrangement, with the innermost limb providing the lip for engagement within the channel of the lid, and an inside surface of the outermost limb of the channel arrangement of the base and an outer surface of the outermost limb of the channel of the lid having mechanically interengaging formations.

Preferably the mechanical interengaging formations, or at least one of them, is carried on a respective lid or base part, such as a channel or limb, which is resiliently movable to enable repeated engagement and disengagement of the lid and base.

The manually engageable member is preferably provided on the lid, adjacent to a part of the periphery of the lid. Conveniently, where the container is generally rectangular or another polygonal configuration in plan view, the manually engageable member is provided at or adjacent to a corner of the lid.

Preferably, when in the initial condition, the second part of the manually engageable member is secured relative to the lid by means of a rupturable element which is ruptured as the second part is moved from the initial condition towards the intermediate condition.

Thus it will be immediately obvious when the manually engageable member has been tampered with.

Movement of the second part from the intermediate position, away from the container, may be adapted to cause at least local distortion of the lid and/or base to permit of disengagement between the inter-engageable formations of the lid and the base. Where the retention portion is provided around substantially the entire periphery of the base, when the interengaging formations have been disengaged at one point on the periphery, such as a corner, and the lid may then progressively be removed from the base around the entire periphery of the container.

The invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:

FIGURE 1 is a fragmentary side sectional view of a container in accordance with the invention.

FIGURE 2 is a plan view of part of the container shown in figure 1,

FIGURE 3 is a side sectional view through a manually engageable member of the container of figures 1 and 2 but shown in an intermediate position.

FIGURE 4 is a fragmentary side sectional view of a modified container in accordance with the invention.

Referring to the drawings, there is shown a lidded container 10 comprising a base 11 and a lid 12. The container 10 may be used for example, for the storage and sale of ice cream or any other commodity as desired, and in the example shown, the container 10 and another similar container 10a are arranged to be stackable one above the other.

The containers 10, 10a are each generally rectangular in plan view although the corners C of the rectangle are rounded. The containers 10, 10a are generally cuboid.

In another arrangement, the containers 10, 10a may be of a alternative polygonal configuration in plan view and need not be cuboid and stackable as in the example described.

The bases 11 of the containers 10, 10a each comprise a generally rectangular base wall 13 and an upstanding peripheral wall 14. A step 15 is provided between the base wall 13 and peripheral wall 14 so that the area of the base wall 13 is slightly smaller than the cross sectional area of the remainder of the container 10, so that the base wall 13 and step 15 can be nested inside a corresponding recess 16 of the lid 12 inside the peripheral wall 14 of the next lowermost container.

At its uppermost end, the peripheral wall 14 provides a lip 18 and preferably continuously around the outside of the lip 18, a retention portion 19. If desired, the retention portion 19 may be provided only at discrete positions around the upper ends of the peripheral wall 14 of the base 11.

Thus at the uppermost end, the peripheral wall 14 has a generally U-shaped configuration, at least where the retaining portion(s) 19 is/are provided, comprising an inner limb providing the lip 18 and an outer limb provided by the retaining portion 19.

The lid 12 comprises a generally flat top 20 to the container 10 and at the periphery of the lid 12 there is provided an inverted U-shaped channel 21 which is upstanding from the flat top 20, such that recess 16 is bounded by the channel 21.

When the container 10 is initially closed, the lip 18 of the base 11 is received within the channel 21 of the lid 12, preferably in sealing engagement, such that the contents of the container 10 are sealed.

An outer limb 22 of channel 21 of the lid 12 has an indent 23 which comprises a first mechanically inter-engaging formation, and the retention portion 19 has a corresponding bead 24 providing a second mechanically inter-engaging formation. The bead 24 and indent 23 mechanically inter-engage when the lid 12 is closed on the base 11 and retain the lid 12 relative to the base 11 in a closed condition.

The base 11 is preferably made as an integral moulding in a suitable plastics material such that the base 11, particularly in the region of the retention portion 19, is at least slightly resiliently deformable.

Similarly, the lid 12 is preferably made as an integral moulding in a suitable plastics material so that particularly in the region of the channel 21, the lid 12 is at least slightly resiliently deformable. However, when initially closed, the lid 12 is not readily separable from the base 11, as there is no means of causing relative distortion between the lid 12 and the base 11 such as is required to disengage the bead 24 and indent 23.

A manually engageable member 30 is fixed to the top wall 20 of the lid 12 adjacent a corner C of the container 10 and is operable both to facilitate disengagement of the mechanically inter-engaging formations 23,24, of the lid 12 and base 11, and to provide an immediate indication of whether or not an attempt has previously been made to open the container 10.

The manually engageable member 30 is of a generally planar configuration, comprising a first part 31 having a preferably integrally formed stud 32 which is received in an opening 33 of the lid 12 and deformed thus to fix the manually engageable member 30 relative to the lid 12. The manually engageable member 30 may be made of metal, in which case, the stud 32 may be mechanically deformed in the manner of a rivet, or preferably, the manually engageable member 30 is moulded in a suitable plastics material, in which case the stud 32 is deformed by some heat source or the like.

This method of fixing the manually engageable member 30 to the lid 12 may permit of some movement of the manually engageable member 30 as a whole about an axis A of the stud 32, but this is not detrimental to the operation of the manually engageable member 30.

In an alternative arrangement, a stud could be provided integrally with the lid 12, and received in an aperture of the member 30 before being deformed.

The manually engageable member 30 comprises a second part 35 which is movable relative to the first part 31 due to the provision of a line of weakness 36, away from an initial condition shown in figures 1 and 2, to an intermediate position shown in figure 3. In figure 3, the stud 32 is shown undeformed. This can be achieved by manually pressing the second part 35 away from the lid 12.

The line of weakness 36 is conveniently provided by a thinned portion 37 as indicated in figure 3, although may be provided by partially perforating the member 30 or by any other suitable means as required.

The second part 35 of the manually engageable member 30 has an opening 38 of finger size, whereby the second part 35 can be manually engaged by a finger once pressed upwardly from the lid 12.

The second part 35 is, when the member 30 is in the initial condition, secured to the lid 12 by means of a readily rupturable element 39 which may be a weak weld, an adhesive web or the like, for examples only.

The second part 35 of the manually engageable member 30 may be prised way from lid 12 and moved towards the intermediate position along the line of weakness 36 thereby rupturing element 39 and making it immediately obvious that the manually engageable member 30 has been tampered with.

Preferably, the member 30 is formed with the line of weakness 36 such that the second part 35 is at an angle X of a few degrees relative to first part 31, the member 30 retaining a memory of this angle when the second part 35 is secured to the lid. Thus immediately element 39 is ruptured, the second part 35 will move from the ini-

tial condition to the intermediate position shown in figure 3.

Thus any attempt to open the container 10 will be indicated because the element 39 will be ruptured and the second part 35 will not lie flat against the lid 12.

Where the member 30 is not formed with part 31 at an angle X to part 35, preferably, the material from which the manually engageable member 30 is made is such that when the second part 35 is moved to the intermediate position (i.e. away from lid 12) about the line of weakness 36, the member 30 is permanently distorted at the thinned region 37 and cannot then readily be returned to the position indicated in figures 1 and 2 in which the second part 35 lies flat adjacent the top wall 20 of the lid 12.

To facilitate or cause rupturing of the element 39, the top wall 20 of the lid 12 may be pressed downwardly by a user, in the region of the connection of the second part 35 to the wall 20 where the rupturable element 39 is provided.

When the second part 35 of the manually engageable member 30 has moved to the intermediate position as indicated in figure 3, any further movement upwards away from the wall 20 of the lid 12, will cause local distortion of the lid 12 particularly at the channel 21. This distortion will cause disengagement of bead 24 of the retention portion 19 from the indent 23 of the limb 22 of the lid 12.

The lid 12 may then be removed from the base 11 progressively by disengaging the bead 24 of the retention portion 19 from the indent 23 of the channel 21 of the lid around the entire periphery of the container.

Various modifications may be made without departing from the scope of the invention.

For example, if desired, instead of the second part 35 of the manually engageable member 30 being secured to the top wall 20 of the lid 12 when in an initial condition, the second part 35 could alternatively be secured to the channel 21 of the lid or even to a part of the base 11. In each case though, when the second part 35 has been moved away from its initial condition, it will be immediately apparent that the manually engageable member 30 has been tampered with and that an attempt has been made to open the container 10.

Although the arrangement for providing of retention of the lid 12 relative to the base 11 which has been described in the specification, is a preferred arrangement, other arrangements are possible. For example, an arrangement may be possible in which mechanically inter-engaging formations are provided between the limb 22 of channel 21 of the lid 12, and the lip 18 of the base.

A container in accordance with the invention need not be stackable as in the example described.

The top wall 20 of the lid 12 need not be flat as described, but could be convoluted or of any other suitable construction as required.

The container 10 need not be polygonal in plan view, but could be round, although the invention particularly lends itself to an arrangement having a corner C where local distortion of the lid 12 and/or base 11 can most conveniently occur so as to facilitate removal of the lid 12 from the base 11.

The manually engageable member 30 need not be of the so called "ring pull" configuration, as illustrated in the drawings, but may be of another configuration as desired.

The lid 12 and/or base 11 need not be made of a plastics material moulded in a single integral part, but could be provided in other materials and by other methods of manufacture, as desired.

In a modification, shown in figure 4, the manually engageable member 30 is disposed in a recess 30a in the top wall 20 of the lid 12, the recess 30a being, in plan view, of similar shape to and slightly larger than the plan outline of the member 30 so as to provide a small gap of about 1 mm to 3 mm wide therebetween. If desired, the recess may be of different plan configuration to member 30 so long as it accommodates the member 30. In this modification, a label may be provided extending over all or part of the top wall 20 and over the member 30. For example, the label may be secured to the top wall 20 and/or the member 30 by an adhesive. In this case, any tampering with the member 30 would necessitate interference with the label and so draw further attention to the tampering.

Claims

1. A lidded container (10) comprising a base (11) and a lid (12), each having inter-engageable formations (24,23) which cooperate to retain the lid (12) relative to the base (11), in a closed condition, a manually engageable member (30) operable to facilitate disengagement between the inter-engageable formations (24,23) of the lid (12) and base (11), to permit the container (10) to be opened, and the member (30) being adapted to indicate when at least part of the member (30) has been moved from an initial condition towards an operable position thus to indicate whether or not an attempt has previously been made to open the container (10), characterised in that the manually engageable member (30) comprises a first part (31) which is fixed relative to the lid (12), and a second part (35) which is moveable relative to the first part (31) and the lid (12) from the initial condition to an intermediate position, the second part (35) then being immovable back to the initial condition without it being apparent that the second part (35) has previously been moved from the initial condition, the first and second parts (31, 35) of the manually engageable member (30) being integrally provided and there being a line of weakness (37) about which the second part (35) is moveable from the initial position, relative to the first part (31) and the lid (12).

2. A container according to claim 1 characterised in that the base (11) comprises a base wall (13) and a peripheral wall (14), the peripheral wall (14) having at or towards its uppermost end a lip (18), and the lid (12) comprising a corresponding inverted U-shaped channel (21) engageable with the lip (18) to enable the lid (12) to be closed relative to the base (11).

3. A container according to claim 2 characterised in that the peripheral wall (14) of the base (11) includes a retention portion (19) having a formation (24) which when the lid (12) is closed on the base (11), mechanically interengages with a corresponding formation (23) provided on one of the limbs of the channel (21) of the lid (12).

4. A container according to claim 3 wherein the retention portion (19) extends around substantially the entire periphery of the base (11).

5. A container according to claim 3 or claim 4 characterised in that the upper part of the peripheral wall (14) of the base (11) comprises a channel arrangement, with the innermost limb providing the lip (18) for engagement within the channel (21) of the lid (12), and an inside surface of the outermost limb (22) of the channel (21) of the base (11) and an outer surface of the outermost limb of the channel of the lid (12) having mechanically interengaging formations (23,24).

6. A container according to any one of claims 1 to 5 characterised in that the mechanical interengaging formations (23,24), or at least one of them, is carried on a respective lid (12) or base (11) part, which is resiliently movable to enable repeated engagement and disengagement of the lid (12) and base (11).

7. A container according to any one of claims 1 to 6 characterised in that the manually engageable member (30) is provided on the lid (12), adjacent to a part of the periphery of the lid (12).

8. A container according to any one of claims 1 to 7 characterised in that when in the initial condition, the second part (35) of the manually engageable member (30) is secured relative to the lid (12) by means of a rupturable element (39) which is ruptured as the second part (35) is moved from the initial condition towards the intermediate condition.

9. A container according to any one of claims 1 to 8 characterised in that movement of the second part (35) of the manually engageable member (30) from the intermediate position, away from the lid (12), is adapted to cause at least local distortion of the lid (12) and/or base (11) to permit of disengagement between the inter-engageable formations (23,24) of the lid (12) and the base (11).

Patentansprüche

1. Ein Behälter (10) mit Deckel, der eine Basis (11) und einen Deckel (12) umfaßt, die jeweils ineinander eingreiffähige Ausbildungen (24, 23) aufweisen, die zusammenwirken, um den Deckel (12) an der Basis (11) in einem geschlossenen Zustand zu halten, wobei ein manuell eingreiffähiges Teil (30) bedienbar ist, um das Lösen des Eingriffs der ineinander eingreiffähigen Ausbildungen (24, 23) des Deckels (12) und der Basis (11) zu erleichtern und den Behälter (10) zu öffnen, und das Teil (30) gestaltet ist, um anzuzeigen, wenn wenigstens ein Teil des Teils (30) aus einem Anfangszustand in eine Betriebsposition bewegt worden ist, um somit anzuzeigen, ob vorher versucht oder nicht versucht worden ist, den Behälter zu öffnen (10), dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das manuell eingreiffähige Teil (30) einen ersten Teil (31), der an den Deckel (12) befestigt ist, und einen zweiten Teil (35) umfaßt, der relativ zu dem ersten Teil (31) und dem Deckel (12) von dem Anfangszustand in eine Zwischenposition bewegbar ist, wobei der zweite Teil (35) dann nicht in den Anfangszustand zurückbewegbar ist, ohne daß ersichtlich ist, daß der zweite Teil (35) bereits aus dem Anfangszustand bewegt worden ist, wobei die ersten und zweiten Teile (31, 35) des manuell eingreiffähigen Teils (30) einteilig ausgebildet sind und es eine Biegelinie (37) gibt, um die der zweite Teil (35) aus der Anfangsposition relativ zu dem ersten Teil (31) und dem Deckel (12) bewegbar ist.

2. Ein Behälter nach Anspruch 1, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die Basis (11) eine untere Wand (13) und eine äußere Wand (14) umfaßt, wobei die äußere Wand (14) an oder in Richtung zu ihrem obersten Ende eine Lippe (18) aufweist, und der Deckel (12) einen entsprechenden Kanal (21) in Gestalt eines umgekehrten U umfaßt, der mit der Lippe (18) eingreiffähig ist, um den Deckel (12) an der Basis (11) schließen zu können.

3. Ein Behälter nach Anspruch 2, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die äußere Wand (14) der Basis (11) einen Rückhalteabschnitt (19) mit einer Ausbildung (24) einschließt, die, wenn der Deckel (12) auf der Basis (11) geschlossen ist, mit einer entsprechenden Ausbildung (23), die an einem der Schenkel des Kanals (21) des Deckels (12) vorgesehen ist, in mechanischem Eingriff steht.

4. Ein Behälter nach Anspruch 3, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der Rückhalteabschnitt (19) sich um

im wesentlichen den gesamten Umfang der Basis (11) erstreckt.

5. Ein Behälter nach Anspruch 3 oder Anspruch 4, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß der obere Teil der äußeren Wand (14) der Basis (11) eine Kanalanordnung umfaßt, wobei der innerste Schenkel die Lippe (18) zum Eingriff in den Kanal (21) des Deckels (12) bereitstellt, und eine Innenseite des äußersten Schenkels (22) des Kanals (21) der Basis (11) und eine Außenseite des äußersten Schenkels des Kanals des Deckels (12) mechanisch ineinander eingreifende Ausbildungen (23, 24) aufweisen.

6. Ein Behälter nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1 bis 5, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß die mechanisch ineinander eingreifenden Ausbildungen (23, 24) oder wenigstens eine davon auf einem jeweiligen Deckel (12) - bzw. Basis (11) -teil getragen werden/wird, der federnd bewegbar ist, um ein wiederholtes Eingreifen und Lösen des Deckels (12) und der Basis (11) zu ermöglichen.

7. Ein Behälter nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1 bis 6, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß das manuell eingreiffähige Teil (30) benachbart zu einem Teil des Umfangs des Deckels (12) an dem Deckel (12) vorgesehen ist.

8. Ein Behälter nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1 bis 7, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß im Anfangszustand der zweite Teil (35) des manuell eingreiffähigen Teils (30) an dem Deckel (12) mittels eines brechbaren Elements (39) gesichert ist, das gebrochen wird, wenn der zweite Teil (35) aus dem Anfangszustand zu dem Zwischenzustand bewegt wird.

9. Ein Behälter nach irgendeinem der Ansprüche 1 bis 8, dadurch gekennzeichnet, daß eine Bewegung des zweiten Teils (35) des manuell eingreiffähigen Teils (30) aus der Zwischenposition von dem Deckel (12) weg gestaltet ist, um wenigstens eine örtliche Verformung des Deckels (12) und/oder der Basis (11) zum Lösen des Eingriffs der ineinander eingreiffähigen Ausbildungen (23, 24) des Deckels (12) und der Basis (11) zu bewirken.

Revendications

1. Récipient à couvercle (10) comprenant un corps (11) et un couvercle (12), chacun d'eux présentant des formations (24, 23) mutuellement enclenchables qui coopèrent pour retenir le couvercle (12) par rapport au corps (11) à l'état fermé, un élément (30) que l'on peut introduire à la main et actionner pour faciliter la séparation des formations mutuellement enclenchables (24, 23) du couvercle (12) et du corps (11), afin de permettre l'ouverture du récipient (10), l'élément (30) étant en mesure d'indiquer lorsqu'au moins une partie de l'élément (30) a été déplacée à partir d'un état initial vers une position d'utilisation, pour ainsi indiquer si une tentative d'ouverture du récipient (10) a eu lieu ou non auparavant, caractérisé en ce que l'élément manuellement engageable (30) comprend une première partie (31), qui est fixe par rapport au couvercle (12), et une deuxième partie (35) qui est mobile par rapport à la première partie (31) et au couvercle (12), à partir de l'état initial jusqu'à une position intermédiaire, la deuxième partie (35) ne pouvant alors pas être ramenée dans l'état initial sans qu'il ne soit évident que la deuxième partie (35) a été auparavant déplacée à partir de l'état initial, les première et deuxième parties (31, 35) de l'élément manuellement engageable (30) étant d'un seul tenant et une ligne de moindre résistance (37) étant prévue, autour de laquelle la deuxième partie (35) peut être déplacée à partir de la position initiale, par rapport à la première partie (31) et au couvercle (12).

2. Récipient selon la revendication 1, caractérisé en ce que le corps (11) comprend une paroi de base (13) et une paroi périphérique (14), la paroi périphérique (14) comportant une lèvre (18) au niveau de, ou vers, son extrémité supérieure, et le couvercle (12) comprenant un évidement en U renversé (21) de forme correspondante pour s'enclencher avec la lèvre (18) pour ainsi permettre la fermeture du couvercle (12) par rapport au corps (11).

3. Récipient selon la revendication 2, caractérisé en ce que la paroi périphérique (14) du corps (11) comprend une partie de retenue (19) ayant une formation (24) qui, lorsque le couvercle (12) est fermé sur le corps (11), s'enclenche mécaniquement avec une formation correspondante (23) prévue sur l'une des branches de l'évidement en U (21) du couvercle (12).

4. Récipient selon la revendication 3, dans lequel la partie de retenue (19) s'étend sensiblement sur toute la périphérie du corps (11).

5. Récipient selon la revendication 3 ou la revendication 4, caractérisé en ce que la partie supérieure de la paroi périphérique (14) du corps (11) comprend un agencement en forme de U, dont la branche située le plus à l'intérieur constitue la lèvre (18) destinée à entrer dans l'évidement en U (21) du couvercle (12), tandis qu'une surface intérieure de la branche (22) située le plus à l'extérieur de l'évidement en U (21) du corps (11) et une surface extérieure de la branche (22) située le plus à l'extérieur

de l'évidement en U du couvercle (12) comportent des formations à enclenchement mécanique (23, 24).

6. Récipient selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 5, caractérisé en ce que les formations à enclenchement mécanique (23, 24), ou du moins l'une d'elles, est ou sont située(s) sur une partie respective du couvercle (12) ou du corps (11), cette partie étant élastiquement mobile pour permettre un enclenchement et une séparation répétés du couvercle (12) et du corps (11).

7. Récipient selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 6, caractérisé en ce que l'élément manuellement engageable (30) est prévu sur le couvercle (12), de manière adjacente à une partie de la périphérie du couvercle (12).

8. Récipient selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 7, caractérisé en ce que, dans l'état initial, la deuxième partie (35) de l'élément manuellement engageable (30) est fixée par rapport au couvercle (12) au moyen d'un élément cassable (39) qui est brisé lorsque la deuxième partie (35) est déplacée de l'état initial vers l'état intermédiaire.

9. Récipient selon l'une quelconque des revendications 1 à 8, caractérisé en ce que le déplacement de la deuxième partie (35) de l'élément manuellement engageable (30) à partir de la position intermédiaire, en s'éloignant du couvercle (12), est propre à provoquer une déformation au moins locale du couvercle (12) et/ou du corps (11) pour permettre la séparation des formations mutuellement enclenchables (23, 24) du couvercle (12) et du corps (11).

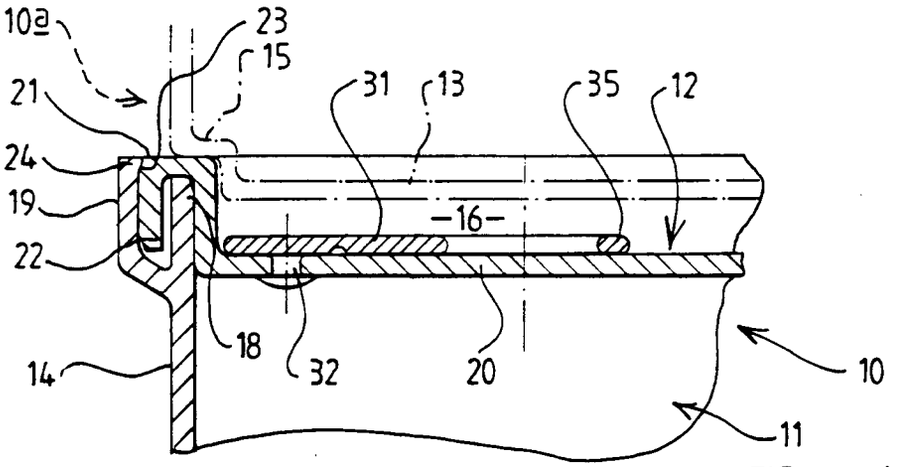
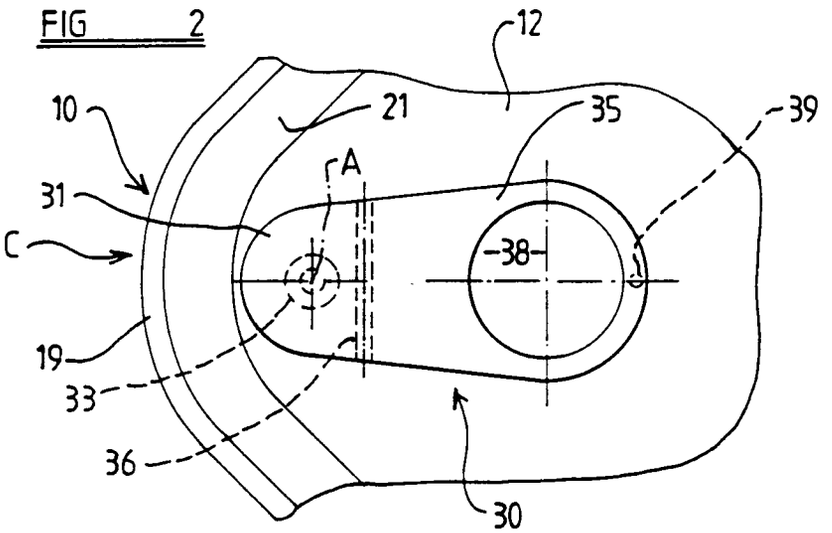


FIG 1

FIG 2



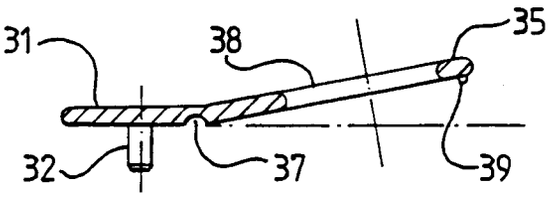


FIG 3

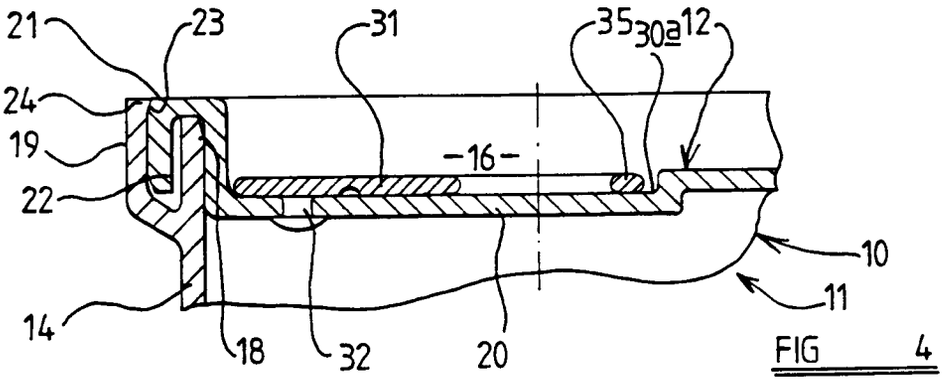


FIG 4