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## EUROPEAN PATENT APPLICATION

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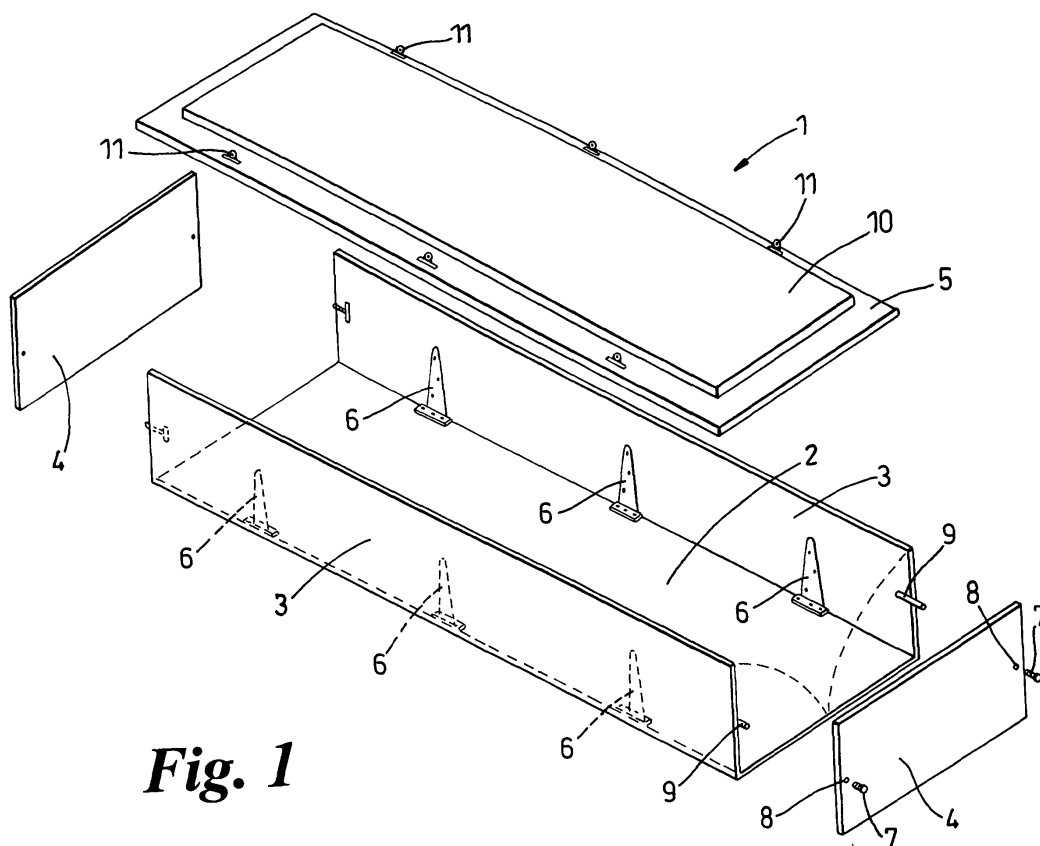
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(54) **A coffin cover**

(57) A coffin cover (1) is provided in the form of a traditional wooden coffin or casket with base, side and end panels and a lid (2, 3, 4 and 5). The end panels (4) can be detached from the side panels (3) of the cover (1) and, on removal of the lid (5), the side and end panels

(3 and 4) can be located parallel with the base panel (2) together with the lid (5) to form a flat pack. Such an arrangement has the advantage that on removal of an inner coffin made of cardboard or the like, the cover 1 can be collapsed into the flat pack and discretely removed from a crematorium.



**Fig. 1**

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## Description

**[0001]** The present invention relates to a coffin cover to enclose an inner coffin which will usually be made of inexpensive, recycled and/or biodegradable material.

**[0002]** Traditional wooden coffins are expensive items and typically have intricate metal or plastic fittings. If a body is to be cremated, conventionally the coffin is incinerated along with the body. Many people, however, see this as wasteful both from a financial and from an environmental point of view. As a result it is now possible to secure coffins made from less expensive, environmentally friendly materials such as cardboard and wicker. However, such coffins are not attractive and many people choose not to use them simply for appearance's sake at the funeral.

**[0003]** With a view to overcoming the aforementioned problem, coffin covers have been proposed which comprise an outer cover in the form of a traditional wooden coffin or casket in which the actual cardboard coffin is located. A panel of the outer coffin cover is removable in order that, immediately prior to cremation and out of view of the attendees at the funeral, the inner coffin can be removed from the cover for incineration. The coffin cover can then be re-used. There is, however, a problem with this practice as many crematoria are reluctant to be seen returning what appears to be a coffin to the funeral director immediately after the funeral for removal in the hearse.

**[0004]** The object of the present invention is to overcome the aforementioned problem.

**[0005]** According to the present invention there is provided a coffin cover in the form of a traditional coffin or casket with a base panel, side panels, end panels and a lid,

characterised in that the end panels can be detached from the side panels of the cover and, on removal of the lid, the side panels and the end panels can be stacked to lie parallel with the base panel and the lid to form a flat pack.

**[0006]** Such a pack has the advantage that it can be placed inside a carrying case, bag or cover and removed discretely by a back door from a crematorium without it being realized that it comprises the coffin cover. In addition, such a pack can be readily carried by one person. Also, as the pack only has a thickness of a few centimetres, it can be stowed away beneath the deck of the hearse, which can therefore exit the grounds of a crematorium apparently empty.

**[0007]** Preferably, the side panels are hinged to the base panel. Alternatively, the side panels are detachably fastened to the base panel.

**[0008]** Preferably, the base panel has a width that is at least twice the width of the side panels in order that they can be located without overlap within the area defined by the base panel.

**[0009]** Preferably also, the inner side of the lid defines a recess in which the end panels can be located when

detached from the side panels. Such a recess can also be used to accommodate any handles provided on the outer faces of the side panels, the end panels being located between the handles.

**[0010]** Preferably also, the end panels can be bolted to the side panels via threaded fasteners that pass through bores formed in the end panels and into closed bores defined in side edges of the side panels.

**[0011]** Preferably also, the lid can be screwed to the side panels via threaded fasteners that pass through bores formed in the lid and into closed bores defined in the uppermost edge of the side panels.

**[0012]** Preferably also, a plurality of the closed bores defined in the uppermost edge of the side panels are each fitted with a threaded bracket or washer through which the fastener must also pass when being screwed into the closed bore.

**[0013]** Preferably also, each of the brackets or washers is seated into a portion of increased diameter at the open end of the closed bores in the uppermost edge of the side panels.

**[0014]** Preferably also, brackets rather than washers are provided which brackets are secured to the interior face of the side panels.

**[0015]** Preferably also, the lid can be secured to the side panels by threaded fasteners in the form of plume screws.

**[0016]** Advantageously, a bag or cover is provided into which the flat packs can be located.

**[0017]** Preferably also, the bag or cover can be folded or rolled for storage within the recess in the lid when the coffin cover is in an erected state.

**[0018]** Preferably also, the bag comprises at least one pocket in which fasteners holding the cover in an erected state can be stored when the cover has been dismantled into the flat pack.

**[0019]** An example of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings in which:-

Fig. 1 is a perspective, partially exploded view of a coffin cover according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a vertical cross-sectional view, to an enlarged scale, of a portion of a side panel and a lid, when fitted thereto, of the coffin cover shown in Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a cross-sectional view along the line III in Fig. 2.

Fig. 4 is a perspective view of a bag, in an unfolded condition and to a reduced scale as compared with Fig. 1, for use in transporting the coffin cover of the invention;

Fig. 5 is a view similar to Fig. 4 but showing the bag partially folded around a coffin cover; and

Fig. 6 is a view similar to Fig. 5 but showing the bag when almost in a closed position folded around a coffin cover.

**[0020]** A coffin cover 1 is provided which when erected has the appearance of a traditional wooden coffin or casket. The cover 1 may be provided with ornate handles (not shown) and other ornamental furniture appropriate for a coffin. As the cover 1 is going to be re-used and not incinerated or buried, the cover 1 can be made of solid wood rather than veneered chipboard and can be provided with solid metal furniture rather than metalized plastics furniture. The coffin cover 1 can, therefore, have all the appearance of an expensive coffin.

**[0021]** As shown in the drawing, the coffin cover 1 comprises a base panel 2, two side panels 3, two end panels 4 and a lid 5. The side panels 3 are hinged to the base panel 2 by a series of internally mounted hinges 6 that are evenly spaced along the length of the cover 1. Advantageously, the base panel 2 has a width that is at least twice the width of the side panels 3 in order that they can be folded without overlap to lie parallel to the base panel 2 within the area defined by the base panel 2. The coffin cover 1 is, therefore, slightly wider than would otherwise be the case even given that it must accommodate an actual coffin.

**[0022]** In an alternative arrangement, the side panels 3 may detachably fastened to the base panel 2 using any readily unlockable fastener, for example a bracket with a removable locking pin. This enables the side panels 3 to be completely detached from the base panel 2 and simply overlaid on the base panel 2.

**[0023]** The end panels 4 are bolted to the side panels 3 via threaded fasteners such as bolts 7 that pass through bores 8 formed in the end panels 4 and into closed bores 9 defined in the side panels 3. Preferably, the bolts 7 are provided with ornamental heads (not shown) and can be readily tightened by hand so that they can be easily manually unscrewed when it is desired to collapse the coffin cover 1.

**[0024]** Conveniently, the inner side of the lid 5 defines a recess 10 in which the end panels 4 can be located when detached from the side panels 3. This protects the end panels 4 and means that the thickness of the pack produced when the cover 1 is collapsed can be about the same as the combined thickness of the base panel 1, a side panel 3 and the lid 5. Such a thickness is typically only a few centimetres. If the cover 1 is provided with handles on the side panels 4, these also can be positioned so that they are accommodated within the recess when the cover 1 is collapsed between or to one side of the end panels 4.

**[0025]** The lid 5 is also provided with threaded fasteners such as plume screws 11 that pass through bores 12 formed in the lid 5 and screw into blind threaded bores 13 provided along the top edge of the side panels 3. In addition, the end panels 4 can also be provided with a series of blind threaded bores (not shown) to allow

a number of plume screws 11 to be screwed into the end panels 4. In both cases the plume screws 11 are provided with ornamental 'plumed' heads so that they can be readily tightened and unscrewed by hand.

**[0026]** In order to reduce wear on the threaded bores 13, the open ends of the bores 13 are preferably fitted with threaded brackets 14 or washers (not shown) through which the screws 11 must also pass when being screwed into the closed bores 13. Such brackets 14 are shown in Figs. 2 and 3 and are seated into portions 15 of increased diameter at the ends of the bores 14. Preferably, brackets 14 rather than simple washers are provided, as shown in Figs. 2 and 3, which brackets 14 are each screwed to the interior face of the side panels 3 by a pair of screws 16 that pass into the side faces on either side of the bore 12 respectively. The screws 16 prevent the bracket 14 from being pulled out of the enlarged portions 15 of the bore 13 when the screw 11 is being tightened. Up to eight plume screws 11 and associated bores 13 and brackets 14 are typically provided spaced appropriately along the sides of the lid 5 for each coffin cover 1.

**[0027]** It will be appreciated that the coffin cover 1 can be readily collapsed after a funeral. After removal of the lid 5 and one of the end panels 4, the inner coffin can be removed for cremation. Removal of the other end panel 4 then enables the side panels 3 to be folded down against the base panel 2. The end panels 4 can then be fitted into the recess 10 in the lid which can be positioned over the folded-down side panels 3 to form a flat pack. For ease of handling and also for discretion, a bag or cover 17 is preferably provided into which the pack can then be located. If necessary, the pack may also be strapped using conventional webbing straps or the like prior to being placed in the bag 17. The recess 10 in the lid 5 of the coffin cover 1 is a convenient location to store the bag 17 prior to collapse of the coffin cover 1. Straps or other fastening means can be provided to hold the bag 17 in place within the recess 10 whilst the coffin cover 1 itself is in use.

**[0028]** The bag 17 and its use is shown in Figs. 4 to 6. The bag is preferably made from a strong, weather-proof yet lightweight material that can be folded or rolled so that the bag 17 can be fitted easily within the recess 10. For discretion, it is best if the bag is made in a neutral colour not normally associated with funerals. Suitable materials are canvas, nylon or a polypropylene material. The bag 17 is made of a suitable size for the cover 1 and comprises a main bag portion 18 together with end flaps 19 and side flaps 20. Connecting straps 21 are attached to the end flaps to hold them together. These straps 21 are fastened once the collapsed coffin cover in pack form has been located within the main portion 18 of the bag 17, as shown in Fig. 5. The side flaps 20 can then be folded over the end flaps 19 and secured in place. Securement of the straps 21 to each other and the side flaps 20 is preferably achieved using hook and loop fastening material, such as is marketed under the

trade mark VELCRO. Pieces of this material 22, 23 are secured to the ends of the straps and along the edges of the side flaps 20 to this end. However, it will be appreciated that any suitable fastening arrangement could be used. On the outside of the bag 19 are a series of handles 24, which given the weight of the bag 17 when full, are preferably self secured to the bag 17, for example by double stitching.

**[0029]** The bag 17 may also be provided with two pockets 25,26 as shown in Fig. 5. One of these pockets 25 can be used to store the plume screws 11, bolts 7 and the like which hold the coffin cover 1 together when erected. The other pocket 26 is preferably made using a clear material and is for receiving an identifying label of the funeral director or other documentation.

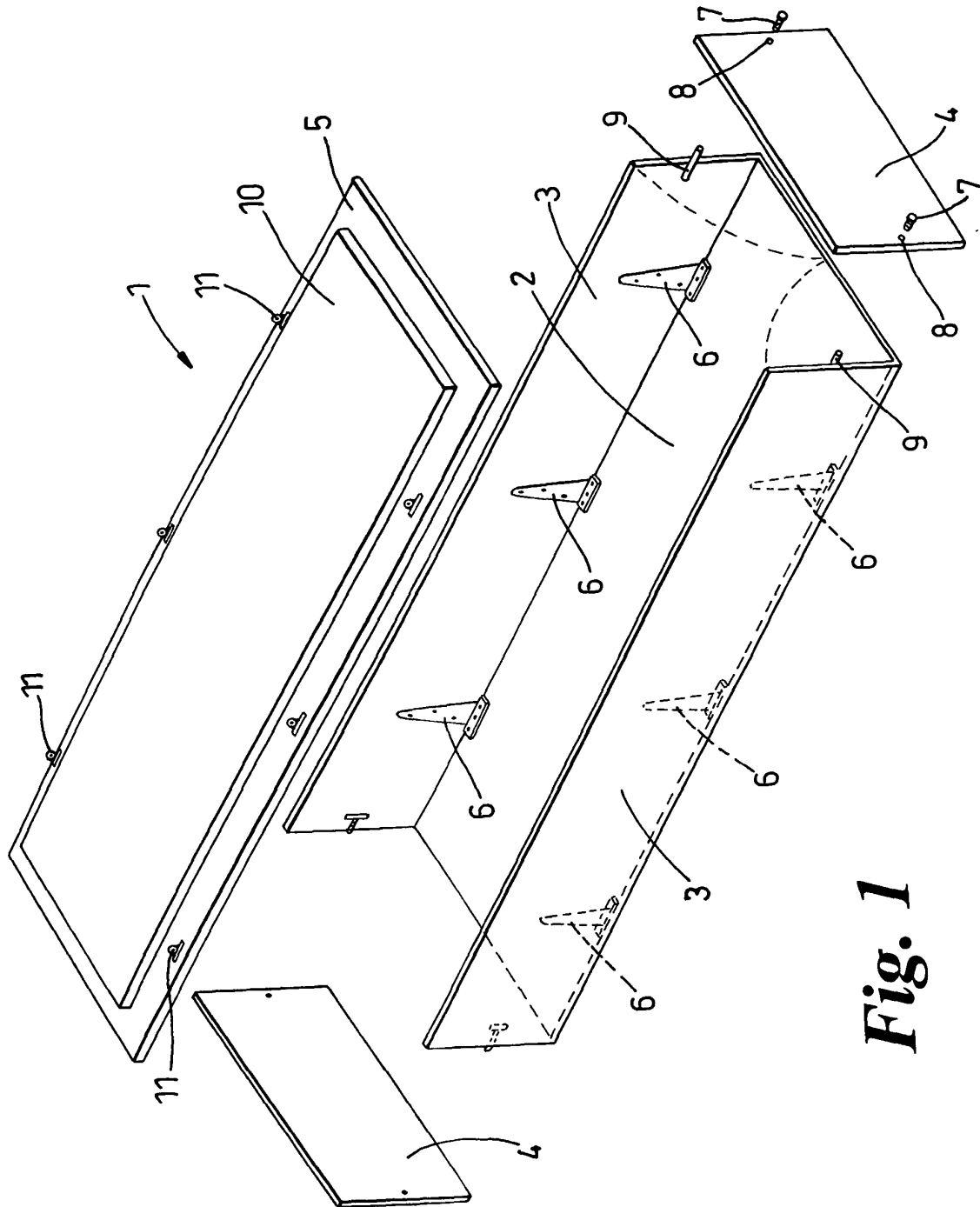
**[0030]** It will thus be appreciated that the invention provides a means of transporting a coffin cover in a discrete and simple manner that overcomes the objections to conventional coffin covers expressed by many crematoria.

## Claims

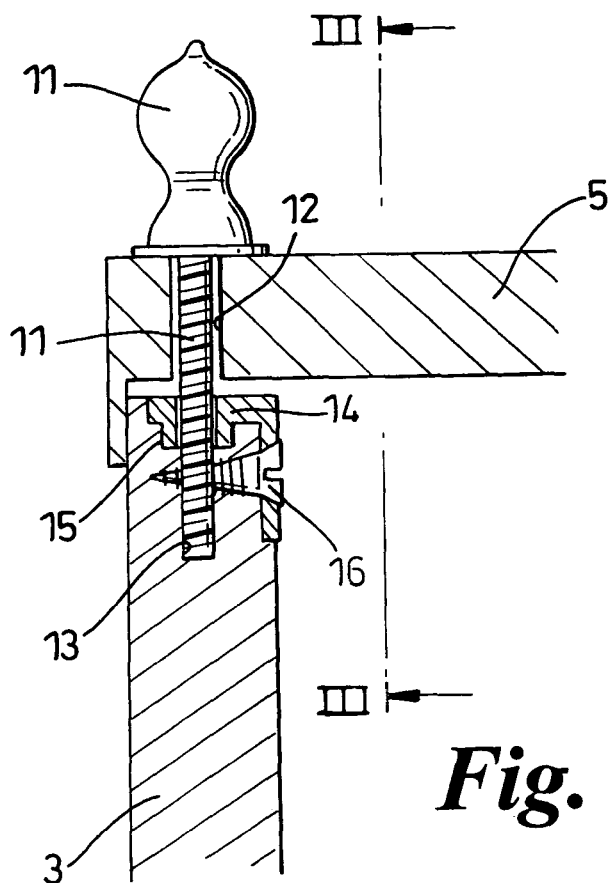
1. A coffin cover (1) in the form of a traditional coffin or casket with a base panel (2), side panels (3), end panels (4) and a lid (5), **characterised in that** the end panels (4) can be detached from the side panels (3) of the cover (1) and, on removal of the lid (5), the side panels (3) and the end panels (4) can be stacked to lie parallel with the base panel (2) and the lid (5) to form a flat pack.
2. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 1, **characterised in that** the side panels (3) are hinged to the base panel (2).
3. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 1, **characterised in that** the side panels (3) are detachably fastened to the base panel (2).
4. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 3, **characterised in that** the base panel (2) has a width that is at least twice the width of the side panels (3) in order that they can be located without overlap within the area defined by the base panel (2).
5. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 4, **characterised in that** the inner side of the lid (5) defines a recess (10) in which the end panels (4) can be located when detached from the side panels (3).
6. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 5, **characterised in that** the end panels (4) can be bolted to the side panels (3) via threaded fasteners (7) that pass through bores formed (8) in the end panels (4) and into closed bores (9) defined in the

side panels (3).

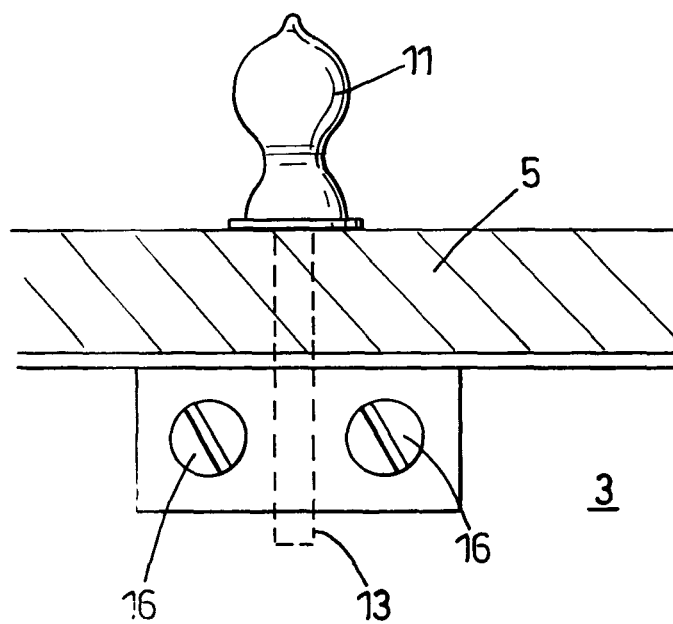
7. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 6, **characterised in that** the lid (5) can be screwed to the side panels (3) via threaded fasteners (11) that pass through bores (12) formed in the lid (5) and into closed bores (13) defined in the uppermost edge of the side panels (3).
8. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 7, **characterised in that** a plurality of the closed bores (13) defined in the uppermost edge of the side panels (3) are each fitted with a threaded bracket (14) or washer through which the fastener (11) must also pass when being screwed into the closed bore (13).
9. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 8, **characterised in that** each of the brackets (14) or washers is seated into a portion (15) of increased diameter at the open end of the closed bores (13) in the uppermost edge of the side panels (3).
10. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 8 or 9, **characterised in that** brackets (14) are provided which are secured to the interior face of the side panels (3).
11. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 10, **characterised in that** the lid (5) can be secured to the side panels by threaded fasteners (11) in the form of plume screws.
12. A coffin cover as claimed in any of Claims 1 to 11, **characterised in that** a bag or cover (17) is provided into which the flat pack can be located.
13. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 12 when dependent on Claim 5, **characterised in that** the bag or cover (17) can be folded or rolled for storage within the recess (10) in the lid when the coffin cover is in an erected state.
14. A coffin cover as claimed in Claim 12 or Claim 13, **characterised in that** the bag (17) comprises at least one pocket (25) in which fasteners holding the cover in an erected state can be stored when the cover has been dismantled into the flat pack.



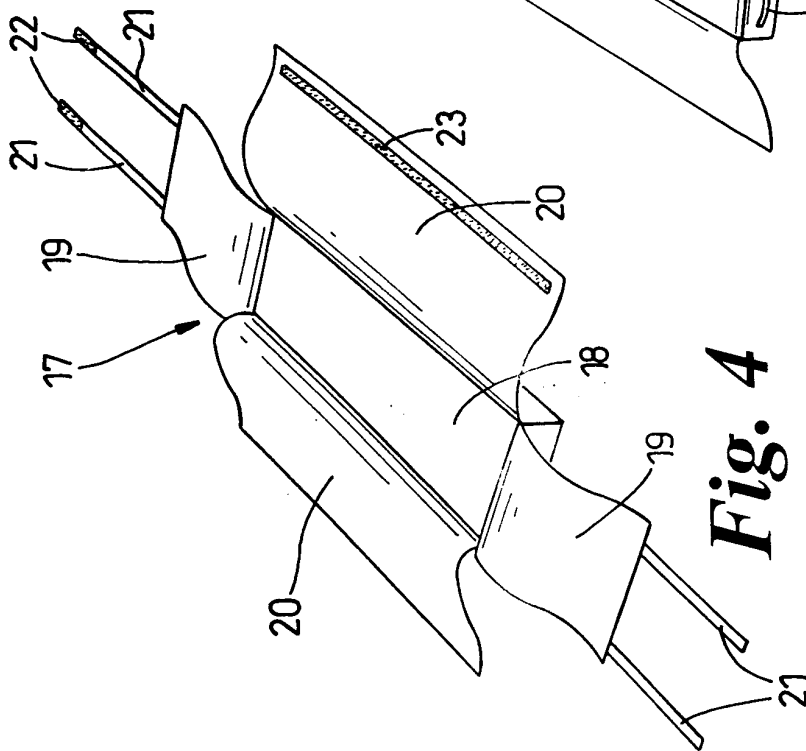
**Fig. 1**



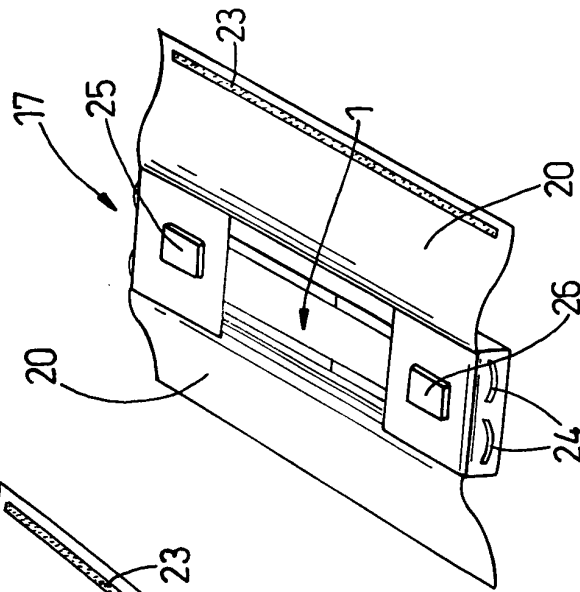
**Fig. 2**



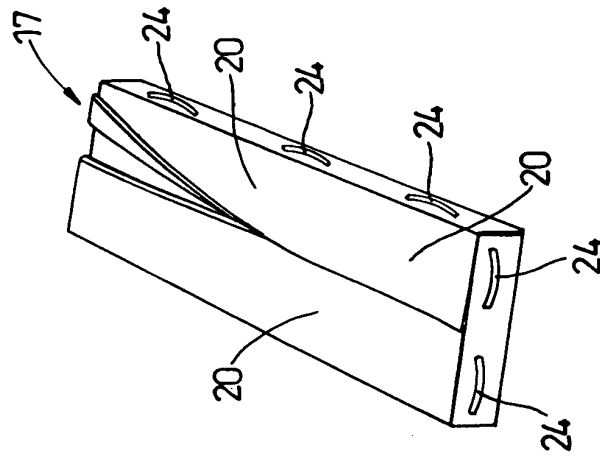
**Fig. 3**



**Fig. 4**



**Fig. 5**



**Fig. 6**



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# EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT

Application Number  
EP 04 25 2636

DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT			
Category	Citation of document with indication, where appropriate, of relevant passages	Relevant to claim	CLASSIFICATION OF THE APPLICATION (Int.Cl.7)
X	US 2002/053120 A1 (COX GRAYSON ET AL) 9 May 2002 (2002-05-09)	1,2,4,6,11,12	A61G17/00
Y	* paragraphs [0041], [0042] *	3,5,13,14	
	* paragraphs [0048], [0061]; figures *		
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Y	US 6 314 626 B1 (BECKER CHARLES R) 13 November 2001 (2001-11-13)	3,5,13,14	
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A	* column 5, line 5 - line 9 *	8-10	
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The present search report has been drawn up for all claims			
Place of search The Hague		Date of completion of the search 16 August 2004	Examiner Cametz, C
<b>CATEGORY OF CITED DOCUMENTS</b> X : particularly relevant if taken alone Y : particularly relevant if combined with another document of the same category A : technological background O : non-written disclosure P : intermediate document		T : theory or principle underlying the invention E : earlier patent document, but published on, or after the filing date D : document cited in the application L : document cited for other reasons ..... & : member of the same patent family, corresponding document	

EPO FORM 1503 03/82 (P04C01)



**ANNEX TO THE EUROPEAN SEARCH REPORT  
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EP 04 25 2636

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned European search report. The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on  
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