

A GARMENT CARRIER



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Background and Field of the Invention

- 5 This invention relates to a garment carrier suitable for a collared shirt.

Collared shirts, particularly for business wear, are prone to creasing particularly when packed for travelling or shipping. Conventionally, such shirts are folded in a particular way which allows for easy transportation and, in the case of

10 merchandising, display. The conventional folding method requires the shirt to be buttoned, the arms to be placed flat along the back of the shirt, both sides folded in a certain amount towards the middle of the back of the shirt and the shirt then folded in half. Particularly for merchandising and professional laundry use, the shirt is supported in this folded form with paper or plastic

15 supports for the back and under the collar to reduce creasing, with the shirt then finally being protected by an outer container which may be in the form of a paper or plastics bag for a laundry establishment or made from stiffer transparent plastics for merchandising use.

- 20 It is a disadvantage of this folding method that the shirt is required to be folded on front and back on both sides and half way up the front of the shirt which leads to noticeable creases. Furthermore, the supports used in packaging the shirt are not generally reusable and also make the final packaged shirt quite bulky.

A packaging case for a folded shirt has been proposed in GB 2291797 which has been sold under the trademark "Stuffed Shirt" and provides support and protection for a shirt folded in a similar manner to that described above, but which can be reused. This proposal, however still has the disadvantage of
5 requiring the shirt to be folded as described, leading to creases and the case needs to be robust and is thus bulky and expensive.

A garment bag in the name of the present applicant is disclosed in WO 2007/06152 A1. The publication discloses an alternative method of folding a
10 shirt to reduce creases, as well as a garment bag to protect and receive a shirt including a relatively rigid pocket to protect the collar of the shirt. The applicant has found that the pocket has some disadvantages in that the pocket tends to add to the manufacturing cost of the product, it can be difficult to introduce and retain the collar in the pocket when packing a shirt and the pocket can be quite
15 bulky.

It is an object to the invention to provide a garment carrier for a collared shirt which alleviates at least one of the disadvantages of the prior art and/or provides the general public with a useful choice.

Summary of the Invention

According to the invention in the first aspect there is provided a garment carrier for a collared shirt, the carrier comprising collar protecting means arranged to
5 be movable between an open position in which a collar of a said shirt may be introduced and a closed position in which the collar protecting means forms a collar protecting region, the collar protecting means forming, when in a closed position, a former around which the remainder of the said shirt is able to be rolled and a cover arranged to receive at least said remainder of the shirt.

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The cover may be arranged to receive the whole or a part of the shirt and is preferably received by the cover or connected to it.

The collar protecting means preferably comprise a sheet of material

15 connected to the cover directly or indirectly, for example by being received in a pocket connected to the cover.

The collar protecting means is preferably arranged to be folded to form the collar protecting region and may comprise first and second opposed
20 portions connected by a spine portion.

The collar protecting means may further in the open position adopt an open jaw-like configuration.

The collar protecting region is of substantially triangular cross section.

The carrier preferably further comprises at least one support member arranged to be disposed in the collar protecting region when the collar protecting means is in the closed position and the collar protecting means may include at least one pocket in which the or each support member is received. The or at least one support member may be cylindrical.

Fastening means is preferably provided, arranged to hold the collar protecting means in the closed position and the fastening means may comprise first and second fastening portions arranged to engage each other at a position adjacent the collar protecting region to hold this closed, with the engaged fastening portion preferably providing padding adjacent the collar protecting region.

Padding may be provided disposed adjacent the collar protecting region and around which the remainder of the said shirt is able to be rolled initially.

The invention extends to a garment carrier with a shirt contained therein packaged for merchandising or after laundering or for any other purpose.

According to the invention in a second aspect, there is provided a carrier, container, or bag for a garment, the carrier, container, packaging or bag comprising a former arranged to be movable between an open position in which

a portion of a said garment may be introduced and a closed position in which the remainder of the said garment is able to be rolled around the former.

According to the invention in a third aspect, there is provided a collar protector
5 for a shirt, the collar protector being movable between an open position in which the collar of a said shirt may be received and a closed position in which the protector forms a crush resistant zone around the collar.

According to the invention in a fourth aspect, there is provided a collar protector
10 arranged to receive the collar of a shirt, the collar protector comprising a stiffening member in sheet form configurable to form a collar-receiving, crush resistant zone.

According to the invention in a fifth aspect, there is provided a collar
15 protector for a collared shirt arranged to be movable between an open position in which a collar of a said shirt may be introduced and a closed position in which the collar protector forms a collar protecting region around a said collar, the collar protector forming, when in a closed position, a former around which the remainder of the said shirt
20 is able to be rolled.

According to the invention in a seventh aspect, there is provided a carrier, container, packaging or bag for a collared shirt, comprising a collar protector as claimed in any or all of the previous three aspects, and a cover.

Brief Description Of The Drawings

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

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Fig. 1 is a perspective view of an embodiment of a garment carrier of the invention illustrating how a shirt may be placed therein;

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Figs. 2 - 4 are views of the garment carrier shown in Fig. 1 at various stages of packing;

Fig. 5 is a cross section across A-A of Fig. 2 showing part of the garment carrier;

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Fig. 6a-e illustrate assembly of the garment carrier of Figs 1 to 5;

Fig. 7 is a view similar to Fig. 2 illustrating a second embodiment of the invention; and

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Fig. 8 is a view similar to Fig. 5 being a cross sectional view through B - B of Fig. 7 showing the collar protector in an alternative position.

Detailed Description Of The Preferred Embodiments

With reference to Figs. 1 to 6, an embodiment of the garment carrier
5 according to the invention is illustrated. The garment carrier is arranged
to protect a shirt for travel or other purposes, The garment carrier
comprises two main portions, a cover 10 and a collar protector 20. The
carrier is arranged to receive a shirt 30 as shown by phantom lines in Fig.
1. The shirt 30 is folded in accordance with the method disclosed with
10 reference to Figs. 1 to 7 and 10 of applicant's application WO
2007/06152, the contents of which are incorporated herein by reference,
and is placed in the carrier such that a portion of the shirt including
the collar 32 is received by the collar protector 20 and the remainder of
the shirt is received by the cover 10.

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The shirt has been shown only in Fig. 1 and not the remaining figures, for
ease of explanation of the structure of the carrier in those figures.

The cover 10 is formed from sheets of plastics material connected
20 together. For resistance to tearing and to allow stitching, a woven
plastics sheet is preferred, for example formed from polypropylene,
polyethylene or polyurethane such as a 2 ounce woven polyurethane sheet,
although other sheet materials of different plastics, thickness, weight and/or of
non-woven form may also be used.

The plastics material may also be spray coated on its inside faces (those faces facing the shirt when packed) with a latex, rubberised or elastomeric film, which can lightly grip the shirt, holding this in place when packing.

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The cover 10 includes a back sheet 100 connected to two side flaps 102, 104 each of which is provided with the complementary half 106a, 106b of a zip fastener 106. The sheet 100 extends longitudinally beyond the flaps 102, 104 in both directions to form in one direction part of the collar protector 20 as best shown in Fig. 5 and in the other direction to form a 100mm overlap 160. The collar protector 20 is further provided with an additional sheet of plastics material 110 which is stitched to sheet 100 and extends parallel to sheet 100 to form a pocket 120. The pocket 120 is sealed at the base by a transverse seam stitched at end 122 and at a position 121 spaced from end 122 but is open at end 124. The open end 124 is provided with a Velcro closure 126, one piece of Velcro being attached to sheet 110 and another complementary piece being attached to sheet 100, this piece being wider to provide some tolerance in the assembled carrier.

20 Inside the pocket 120, a sheet of stiff plastics material 130 is received. The sheet of plastics material 130 is preferably formed from 1.2mm thick polypropylene and is creased at fold lines 132 and 134 to form first and second opposed portions 136, 138 joined by a spine portion 140. The sheet 130 is preferably formed into this configuration by making score lines at positions 132,

134 and then bending the sheet until it naturally adopts a steady state "open jaw" position as shown in Fig. 5 where the opposed portions 136, 138 are opened one to the other at an angle of about 45 degrees.

- 5 Complementary Velcro portions 150, 152 a,b are provided, portion 150 extending transversely across and stitched to sheet 100 and disposed between seam 121 at the base of the pocket 120 and end 122 of sheet 100. Portions 152a and 152b are stitched respectively to flaps 106a and 106b.
- 10 A transverse piece of Velcro 180 is stitched to the bottom end of the back sheet 100 and, when the carrier is rolled up, mates with three complementary pieces of Velcro 182 on the back of the cover (see Fig. 6). The extended portion 160 of the back sheet to which the Velcro 180 is attached ensures that the flaps 102, 104 do not foul the Velcro portion 180 when the carrier is rolled up.
- 15 Velcro portions 182 extend for a certain distance to allow some tolerance in engaging with the portion 180, depending on the thickness of the shirt contained within the carrier.

In use, the shirt 30 is placed in the carrier as shown in Fig. 1 with the collar
20 32 of the shirt introduced within the collar protector 20 in a similar manner to Fig. 7 of WO 2007/06152A and the remainder of the shirt lying on the sheet 100. The flaps 102, 104 are then folded over and the zip portions 106A, 106B connected by means of zipper 107 which is then zipped up to the top of the zip 106 as shown in Fig. 2, with the shirt then held between the sheet 100 and flaps

102, 104. The opposed portion 138 of the collar protector 20 is then pushed down in the direction of arrow F so that Velcro portion 150 engages Velcro portions 152a,b thus closing the collar protector around the collar 32 of the shirt.

- 5 With the collar protector 20 in the thus closed position, this forms a stiff collar protecting region of greater rigidity than the cover 10 which provides a crush-resistant zone to protect the collar against crushing. With the Velcro portions 150, 152a,b connected, the sheet 130 held in the pocket 120 forms a triangular cross-sectional structure to provide physical rigidity and to create a
- 10 void so that the folded part of the collar is not creased. This configuration is shown in Fig. 3.

- After the collar protector has been closed, the cover 10 is rolled up around the collar protector with the first fold being around Velcro portions 150, 152a,b
- 15 which are bent back on each other as the collar protector is rotated to provide some protective padding, matching the support provided by the spine 140. The rolling continues until the whole cover 10 has been rolled up around the collar protector 20 which provides a structural former around which the remainder of the carrier and shirt are rolled to form a rolled-up package as shown in Fig. 4.
- 20 To seal the package, Velcro portion 180 is connected to Velcro portions 182.

Fig. 6 illustrates how the shirt carrier is assembled. The portions of the cover, that is to say, back sheet 100, flaps 102, 104 and pocket forming portion 110 are all stitched together along their connected edges and at seam 121. Sheet

130 is formed from flat sheet plastics material and two score lines are cut at the positions of the fold lines 132, 134 as shown in Fig 6a. The sheet is then pre-bent along those score lines to a steady state shape of Fig. 5 as shown in Fig. 6b and is then opened out again to be flat as shown in Fig. 6c and slipped
5 into the pocket 120 through opening 124 following arrow C as shown in Fig 6d. The Velcro connector 126 is then closed holding the sheet 130 firmly inside. The pre-bent sheet 130 is then allowed to return to its steady state shape as shown in Fig. 6e.

10 A second embodiment of the invention is disclosed in Figs. 7 and 8. This embodiment of the invention is substantially similar to that shown in Figs. 1 to 6 except that, additionally, two transverse pockets 200, 210 are formed from additional sheet portions of plastics material 202, 212 stitched at their edges to sheet 100 as best illustrated in Fig. 8. Two supports in the form of
15 pieces of plastics tubing 220, 230 are placed in respective pockets 200, 210 which are then stitched or otherwise closed. The tubing 220, 230 provides additional rigid support for the collar protecting region. Whereas the sheet 130 of the collar protecting region in the embodiment of Figs 1 to 6 provides support against crushing of the collar, tubing 220, 230 provides additional
20 support, and can resist higher forces. The second embodiment also shows the collar protector open at a steady state position with portions 136, 138 at an obtuse angle rather than the acute angle of the first embodiment.

The embodiments described have particular application in packing a shirt for travel to reduce creasing. Other applications include packaging shirts for sale and packaging shirts after dry cleaning or laundry. For such applications, the garment carrier may be made from disposable materials. For example, the cover may be made from paper with the collar protecting region strengthened using a sheet of cardboard which could be stuck directly to the paper back sheet rather than being placed in a pocket. In such an application adhesive rather than stitching could be used to connect the sheets of the cover and pieces of sticky tape could be used to hold the cardboard sheet in a closed position rather than Velcro and to replace the zip.

The embodiments described are not to be construed as limitative and generally . For example, although the fastening means has been shown as Velcro, this could be any other suitable fastening means such as press studs, zips or such like. Similarly, the zip between the flaps could be any other suitable fastening means. The cover need not be formed from plastics material. As noted above, this could be formed from a paper material or other natural fibre. In an ecofriendly embodiment this could be formed from woven cotton or canvas which may be proofed if water resistant is required. Although it is preferred to form the cover protector with a plastics sheet having two folds formed therein, this could be formed with an arcuate spine portion or with more folds, for example to form a collar protecting region of polygonal, such as rectangular cross-section.

The cover has been shown enclosing the shirt, but this could extend only to where Velcro portions 152a, 152b are disposed. In the second embodiment only a single support 220 or 230 may be used.

- 5 In a further variation, the collar protector may be formed separately. In such a case, the plastics sheet 130 could be formed with the angles shown in Fig. 5 with a separate fastening means, for example complementary engageable press studs provided at each end corner an the sheet itself. The shirt collar would be inserted between the opposed portions as before after which the
- 10 press studs would then be clicked together. The shirt will be rolled up around the sheet 130 directly and then placed completely in the cover which would be in the form of a small sack having a draw string. This embodiment while being part of the invention will provide less protection against creasing, since the cover of the first embodiment has a tendency to act in a similar manner as
- 15 placing tissue paper between the folds of a folded shirt which reduces and inhibits additional creasing. However, in this simplified form, the embodiment of the invention would be less expensive to manufacture whilst still providing some crease resistance.
- 20 In a further variant of the invention, the collar protector is provided and/or sold separately and without the cover, with the shirt being rolled directly an the closed collar protector and then placed in a container, suit case or travelling bag of the user, without a special cover being provided.

Where the embodiments of the invention are used for packaging and display, one additional preferred feature of such a packaging technique is that the garment carrier could be re-useable by the purchaser for subsequent packing of the shirt for travel. The packaging would thus have a use beyond mere transport
5 and display.

The carrier may be used to carry more than one shirt if dimensioned accordingly, for example if the collar protector is so sized to accommodate two collars when closed, the cover has sufficient internal volume for the remainder of the shirts
10 and the Velcro fasteners 182 have enough tolerance to fasten when rolled up with the additional bulk of two shirts. When carrying more than one shirt, each shirt is folded as described in WO 2007/06152 A1 and laid one on top of the other with the collar protector being closed and the carrier rolled up as before. In a similar way, the garment carrier may carry other garments such as
15 underwear and socks at the same time, laid flat and distributed in the cover on top of the folded shirt.

The carrier is suitable for carrying other garments such as trousers, T shirts or collar-less ladies blouses, if the carrier is sized during manufacture
20 appropriately. In such uses, the collar protecting function of the collar protecting means is not used, although this is still used as a former around which the 20 garment is rolled.

This invention is applicable to any kind of carrier, container, packaging or bag for a garment and "garment carrier" is to be construed accordingly.

Having now fully described the invention, it should be apparent to one of
5 ordinary skill in the art that many modifications can be made hereto without departing from the scope as claimed.

CLAIMS

1. A garment carrier for a collared shirt, the carrier comprising collar protecting means arranged to be movable between an open position in which a collar of a said shirt may be introduced and a closed position in which the collar protecting means forms a collar protecting region, the collar protecting means forming, when in a closed position, a former around which the remainder of the said shirt is able to be rolled and a cover arranged to receive at least said remainder of the shirt.
2. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 1 wherein the cover is arranged to receive the whole of the shirt.
3. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the collar protecting means is received by the cover.
4. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the collar protecting means is connected to the cover.
5. A garment carrier as claimed in and one of the preceding claims wherein the collar protecting means comprises a sheet of material.
6. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 5 wherein the collar protecting means further comprises a pocket in which the sheet is received.

7. A garment carrier as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the collar protecting means is arranged to be folded to form the collar protecting region.
- 5 8. A garment carrier as claimed in any one of the preceding claims wherein the collar protecting means comprises first and second opposed portions connected by a spine portion.
9. A garment carrier as claimed in and one of the preceding claims
10 wherein the collar protecting means has in the open position an open jaw-like configuration.
10. A garment carrier as claimed in anyone of the preceding claims wherein the collar protecting region is of substantially triangular
15 cross section.
11. A garment carrier as claimed in any one of the preceding claims further comprising as least one support member arranged to be disposed in the collar protecting region when the collar protecting
20 means is in the closed position.
12. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 9 wherein collar protecting means further comprises at least one pocket in which the or each support member is received.

13. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 11 or claim 12 wherein the or at least one support member is cylindrical.

5 14. A garment carrier as claimed in any one of the preceding claims further comprising fastening means arranged to hold the collar protecting means in the closed position.

10 15. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 14 wherein the fastening means comprises first and second fastening portions arranged to engage each other at a position adjacent the collar protecting region to hold this closed.

15 16. A garment carrier as claimed in claim 15 wherein the engaged fastening portion provides padding adjacent the collar protecting region.

20 17. A garment carrier as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 15 further comprising padding disposed adjacent the collar protecting region and around which the remainder of the said shirt is able to be rolled initially.

18. A garment carrier according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising a shirt contained therein.

19. A shirt packaged for merchandising in a garment carrier as claimed
in any of claims 1 to 17.

5 20. A shirt packaged after laundering in a garment carrier as
claimed in any of claims 1 to 17.

21. A carrier, container, packaging or bag for a garment, comprising a former
arranged to be movable between an open position in which a portion of a
said garment may be introduced and a closed position in which the
10 remainder of the said garment is able to be rolled around the former..

22. A collar protector for a shirt, the collar protector being movable between
an open position in which the collar of a said shirt may be received and a
closed position in which the protector forms a crush resistant zone
15 around the collar.

23. A collar protector arranged to receive the collar of a shirt, the collar
protector comprising a stiffening member in sheet form configurable to
form a collar-receiving crush resistant zone.

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24. A collar protector for a collared shirt arranged to be movable
between an open position in which a collar of a said shirt may
be introduced and a closed position in which the collar
protector forms a collar protecting region around a said collar,

the collar protector forming, when in a closed position, a former around which the remainder of the said shirt is able to be rolled.

- 5 25. A carrier, container, packaging or bag for a collared shirt, comprising a collar protector as claimed in any one of claims 22 to 24 and a cover.