

GABION

The present invention relates to a gabion, particularly to a multi-compartmental gabion, which can be recovered after use.

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Gabions are temporary or semi-permanent fortification structures which are used to protect military or civilian installations from weapons assault or from elemental forces, such as flood waters, lava flows, avalanches, slope erosion, soil instability and the like.

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WO-A-90/12160 discloses wire mesh cage structures useful as gabions. The cage structure is made up of pivotally interconnected open mesh work frames which are connected together under factory conditions so that the cage can fold concertina-wise to take a flattened form for transportation to site, where it
15 can be erected to take an open multi-compartmental form for filling with a suitable fill material, such as sand, soil, earth or rocks.

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WO-A-00/40810 also concerns a multi-compartmental gabion which folds concertina-wise for transportation, and which comprises side walls extending along the length of the multi-compartmental gabion, the side walls being connected at spaced intervals along the length of the gabion by partition walls which are formed from two releasably connected sections, which after use of the gabion can be released, and the gabion unzipped for recovery purposes.

Existing gabions have certain disadvantages with respect to recoverability. For example, recovery of such gabions can be time consuming, difficult, dangerous, impractical, damaging to the gabion material, preventing or compromising its re-use, or a combination of any two or more of these.

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Accordingly, there is a need for an improved recoverable gabion. There is a need for an improved multi-compartmental, recoverable gabion.

Accordingly, the present invention provides a gabion comprising opposed side
10 walls comprising a plurality of side wall elements connected together at spaced intervals by a plurality of partition walls such that spaces between neighbouring pairs of partition walls define, together with the side walls, individual compartments of the gabion, adjacent side and partition walls being
15 connected to one another by pivotal connections enabling the gabion to be folded between fully flattened and deployed configurations, wherein at least one of the pivotal connections is a releasable connection which when released allows a side wall element to open with respect to the gabion to allow access from the side of the gabion to any contents of the gabion compartments.

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Preferably, the releasable connection comprises a hinge member associated with an edge of each adjacent wall to be connected.

The pivotal interconnection between connected walls and/or wall elements
25 may be achieved by providing interconnected walls and/or wall elements with

a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge. The or each hinge member is preferably a helical spring.

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The or each releasable connection preferably comprises a releasable locking member releasably securing the hinge members of each pivotal connection to one another. The pivotal connections ideally allow the gabion to fold concertina-wise for storage or transport, for example by causing adjacent
10 walls of the gabion to fold about a plurality of pivot axes. Specifically, the pivot axes may be spaced apart to enable adjacent walls to lie face-to-face when the gabion is in a folded configuration.

The pivotal interconnection between connected side wall elements is
15 preferably releasable by providing the interconnected side wall elements with a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a first coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge of a first side wall element, a second coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection
20 edge of a second side wall element (connected to the first side wall element along the interconnection edge) and a releasable locking member threaded through overlapped first and second coil members.

According to the present invention there is provided a multi-compartmental
25 gabion comprising opposed side walls connected together at spaced intervals

along the length of the gabion by a plurality of partition walls, at least one side wall comprising a plurality of side wall elements having releasable interconnections which when released allow the side wall elements to open with respect to the gabion to allow access from the side of the gabion to any
5 contents of the gabion compartments.

According to the present invention there is provided a multi-compartmental gabion comprising opposed side walls connected together at spaced intervals along the length of the gabion by a plurality of partition walls, the spaces
10 between neighbouring pairs of partition walls defining, together with the side walls, individual compartments of the multi-compartmental gabion, individual compartments of the multi-compartmental gabion being bounded by opposed side wall sections of the respective opposed side walls, the partition walls being pivotally connected to the side walls, and the side wall sections of the
15 individual compartments comprising at least one side wall element, pivotal connections being provided between neighbouring side wall elements allowing the multi-compartmental gabion to fold concertina-wise for storage or transport, the pivotal connection between at least two neighbouring side wall elements being provided by a hinge member provided on one or both
20 neighbouring side wall elements and by a releasable locking member releasably securing the pivotal connection by cooperating with the hinge member, whereby release of the locking member allows a first neighbouring side wall element to be disconnected from a second neighbouring side wall element and for the first side wall element thereby to move pivotally (by
25 means of its pivotal connection with an opposite neighbouring side wall

element) with respect to the compartment of the gabion bounded by the first neighbouring side wall element to open said compartment through the side wall of the gabion and allow access to any contents of said compartment.

- 5 The multi-compartmental gabion of the invention facilitates post-deployment recovery of the gabion by providing at least one openable side wall section along the length of the gabion. Preferably, a plurality of openable side wall sections are provided. More preferably all of the side wall sections, except those at the ends of the gabion in a gabion having more than two
- 10 compartments, are openable. Most preferably, all of the side wall sections along the length of the gabion are openable. By "openable" is meant that the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of the side wall section is provided by a hinge member provided on one or both of the connected side wall elements and by a releasable locking member
- 15 cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the pivotal connection therebetween. In some preferred embodiments of the invention, a first hinge member is provided on a first neighbouring side wall element and a second hinge member is provided on a second neighbouring side wall element, the releasable locking member cooperating with both the first hinge
- 20 member and the second hinge member releasably to secure the pivotal connection. Opening of an openable side wall section is achievable by releasing the locking member and pulling apart the resulting unconnected side wall elements.

Each side wall section may comprise a single side wall element, in which case the openable pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements is located between neighbouring side wall sections. In this case the pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements and the partition wall marking the boundary between corresponding neighbouring side wall sections is also openable to allow the first neighbouring side wall element to be released both from the second neighbouring side wall element and from the partition wall. Alternatively, each side wall section may comprise a plurality of side wall elements, in which case the openable pivotal connection may be provided between neighbouring side wall elements of a given side wall section. However, even when side wall sections comprise a plurality of side wall elements, openable pivotal connections may be provided between neighbouring side wall sections as well as or instead of between neighbouring side wall elements of a given side wall section. Multi-compartmental gabions comprising a plurality of side wall sections, with different numbers of side wall elements constituting different side wall sections are also contemplated.

Deployment of the gabion of the invention will generally be effected by transporting the folded gabion to a deployment site, unfolding the gabion and filling each individual compartment of the gabion with a fill material. Generally the fill material will be dictated at least partly by the availability of suitable materials at the deployment site. Suitable fill materials include, but are not limited to, sand, earth, soil, stones, rocks, rubble, concrete, debris, snow, ice and combinations of two or more thereof.

There are a number of reasons why it could be desirable to open side wall sections of the gabion. For example, when the deployed gabion is to be decommissioned, it is often desirable to recover the gabion for environmental or aesthetic reasons, or simply out of consideration for the local population.

- 5 Recovery of the gabion of the invention is facilitated by opening up all of the openable side wall sections of the gabion, at least partly removing the fill material from the compartments, and removing the gabion from site.

By way of further example, if the deployed gabion is damaged in use it may be
10 desirable to replace or repair the damaged section of the gabion. Access via the openable side walls of the damaged section facilitates this. Similarly, when it is desired for reasons unconnected with damage to move, alter or replace a gabion section (for example if the position or orientation of the gabion requires alteration), such replacement is again facilitated by the
15 capacity to remove at will fill material from selected gabion sections.

Although the invention is characterised by the presence of at least one openable side wall section, and preferably by a plurality of openable side wall sections, it will often be desirable to provide each individual compartment of
20 the gabion, optionally with the exception of the end compartments of the gabion (when the gabion has more than two compartments), with openable side wall sections. Accordingly there is provided in accordance with the invention a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of each of the side wall
25 sections, or between each neighbouring side wall section, optionally with the

exception of the end side wall sections, is provided by a hinge member provided between the first side wall element of a given side wall section and a second neighbouring side wall element of the given or a neighbouring side wall section, and a releasable locking member cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the pivotal connection. Preferably, a first hinge member is provided on the first side wall element and a second hinge member is provided on the second neighbouring side wall element, and the releasable locking member cooperates with both first and second hinge members releasably to secure the pivotal connection.

Furthermore, although a multi-compartmental gabion will be in accordance with the invention if a plurality of openable side wall sections are provided on one side wall, it is also contemplated that openable side wall sections may be provided on both side wall sections of an individual compartment to allow access to the fill material from both sides. Accordingly the invention provides a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of at least a plurality of opposed side wall sections is provided by a hinge member provided between a first side wall element of a given side wall section and a second neighbouring side wall element of the given or a neighbouring side wall section, and by a releasable locking member cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the pivotal connection. Also contemplated within the scope of the invention is a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of at least a plurality of opposed side wall sections is provided by a first hinge member provided on a

first side wall element of a given side wall section and by a second hinge member on a second side wall element of the given or a neighbouring side wall section and by a releasable locking member connecting the first hinge member to the second hinge member.

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Also contemplated is that openable side wall sections may be provided alternately on first and second opposed side walls along at least part of the length of the gabion. In this way when a gabion is being recovered, cooperating excavating equipment or personnel can be deployed on opposite
10 sides of the gabion to remove fill material from neighbouring compartments simultaneously or in rapid succession if simultaneous excavation is undesirable for safety or other reasons. Thus, the invention provides a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of at least a plurality of side wall sections
15 staggered on alternating opposite side walls along at least part of the length of the gabion is provided by a hinge member provided between a first side wall element of a given side wall section and a second neighbouring side wall element of the given or a neighbouring side wall section, and by a releasable locking member cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the
20 pivotal connection. Also contemplated within the scope of the invention is a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the pivotal connection between the connected side wall elements of at least a plurality of side wall sections staggered on alternating opposite side walls along at least part of the length of the gabion is provided by a first hinge member provided on a first
25 side wall element of a given side wall section and by a second hinge member

on a second side wall element of the given side wall section and by a releasable locking member connecting the first hinge member to the second hinge member.

- 5 A side wall section preferably comprises a single side wall element, or two side wall elements. However, a side wall section, a plurality of side wall sections, or each side wall section may, if desired comprise more than two side wall elements. In this case pivotal connections are preferably provided between each side wall element. Accordingly the invention provides a multi-
- 10 compartmental gabion as described wherein one or more side wall sections comprise a single side wall element. The invention also provides a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein one or more side wall sections comprise two side wall elements pivotally connected together (preferably openably pivotally connected together). Also contemplated within the scope
- 15 of the invention is a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein one or more side wall sections comprise more than two side wall elements, with pivotal interconnections being provided between each neighbouring pair of side wall elements.
- 20 The multi-compartmental gabion of the invention comprises a plurality of connected compartments, each compartment being bounded at opposed ends by a pair of opposed partition walls, and being bounded at opposed sides by a pair of opposed side wall sections, each side wall section comprising at one side wall element. In at least one, two, three or more
- 25 individual compartments of the multi-compartmental gabion, at least one such

side wall element is arranged to be openable, the mechanism of opening being operable when the compartment is loaded with a fill material.

The concertina-wise folding of the gabion may be effected by the side wall sections folding in towards the central longitudinal axis of the gabion, or by the side wall sections folding out away from the central longitudinal central axis of the gabion. The former manner will generally be preferable as the resulting folded gabion will have a relatively smaller cross-sectional surface area in a plane orthogonal to the central longitudinal axis of the gabion.

In one preferred embodiment of the invention the pivotal interconnection between connected walls and/or wall sections and/or wall elements is achieved by providing interconnected walls, wall sections and/or wall elements with a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge. In the case of a straightforward (i.e. – non-openable) pivotal connection, a single coil member may be helically threaded through the connection edge apertures of two (or more) neighbouring walls, wall sections and/or wall elements to achieve pivotal interconnection therebetween. Accordingly, there is provided in accordance with the invention a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein at least one pivotal connection is provided by the presence of a coil member helically threaded through connection edge apertures of connected walls, wall sections or wall elements.

In another preferred embodiment of the invention the openable pivotal interconnection between connected side wall elements is achieved by providing the interconnected side wall elements with a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a first coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge of a first side wall element, a second coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge of a second side wall element (connected to the first side wall element along the interconnection edge) and a releasable locking member threaded through overlapped first and second coil members. Thus, in the case of an openable pivotal connection, a pair of coil members may be helically threaded through the respective opposed connection edge apertures of two neighbouring side wall elements, and a releasable locking member inserted through the overlapped coils of the opposed pair of coil members. Accordingly, there is provided in accordance with the invention a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein at least one openable pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements is provided by the presence of a pair of coil members helically threaded through respective connection edge apertures of neighbouring side wall elements and by a releasable locking member threaded through the respective coil members when overlapped.

Thus, there is provided in accordance with the invention a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein the or at least one hinge member comprises a helical coil.

The releasable locking member may be of any suitable shape or size and may for example comprise an elongate locking pin. The pin may be provided with a gripping protrusion at one end to facilitate manual insertion and/or removal of the locking pin. The gripping protrusion may for example comprise a loop
5 at one end of the locking pin. Accordingly there is provided in accordance with the invention a multi-compartmental gabion as described wherein at least one locking member comprises an elongate locking pin.

The side walls, side wall sections, side wall elements and/or partition walls
10 preferably comprise one or more panel sections of any suitable material, for example steel, aluminium, titanium, any other suitable metal or alloy, or from a plastics, ceramic or natural material such as timber, sisal, jute, coir or seagrass. Normally, steel is preferred, in which case the steel is preferably treated to prevent or hinder steel erosion during deployment of the gabion.
15 The panel may be a closed panel or may be a mesh panel. In the case of a closed panel, connection edge apertures where needed will normally be machined or otherwise provided in the panel edge. In the case of a mesh panel the mesh apertures may serve as connection edge apertures where needed.

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Preferably, the multi-compartmental gabion of the invention comprises a cage structure.

Also preferably, the gabion comprises pivotally interconnected, preferably
25 open meshwork, panels which are connected together under factory

conditions so that the gabion can take a flattened form for transportation to site where it can be erected to take a form in which panels thereof define side, partition and end walls and an open top through which the compartments of the gabion may be filled. Preferably, under factory conditions said panels

5 define side, partition and end walls and are pivotally interconnected edge to edge and are relatively foldable to lie face to face in the flattened form for transportation to site and can be relatively unfolded to bring the gabion to the erected condition without the requirement for any further connection of the side, partition or end walls on site.

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In preferred embodiments of the invention, the side walls of the gabion each comprise a plurality of side panels pivotally connected edge to edge and folded concertina fashion one relative to another. The side walls are preferably connected by partition walls which are pivotally connected thereto,

15 the gabion structure being adapted to be erected on site by pulling it apart by the end walls so that when it is moved from the flattened form to the erected condition the side walls unfold and define with the end walls and partition walls an elongated wall structure having a row of cavities to be filled with a fill material and of which each partition wall is common to the pair of cavities

20 adjacent the partition wall.

The invention will now be more particularly described with reference to the following drawings, in which:

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of a multi-compartmental gabion in accordance with the invention;

Figure 2 shows the multi-compartmental gabion of Figure 1 lined with a geotextile material;

Figure 3 shows the multi-compartmental gabion of Figure 2 when filled with a fill material;

Figure 4 shows a schematic plan view of the multi-compartmental gabion of Figure 1 in expanded (Figure 4a), partially folded (Figure 4b) and fully folded (Figure 4c) configurations;

Figure 5 shows a schematic plan view of a second form of multi-compartmental gabion in accordance with the invention, wherein each side wall section comprises a single side wall element, in expanded (Figure 5a) and partially folded (Figure 5c) configurations, and in expanded configuration with one compartment opened from both sides (Figure 5b);

Figure 6 shows in close-up perspective view the pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements of the gabion of Figures 1 to 5;

Figure 7 shows in close-up perspective view the openable pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements of the multi-compartmental gabion of Figures 1 to 5 before the releasably locking member is installed;

Figure 8 shows in close-up perspective view the openable pivotal connection when made between the components of the Figure 7 drawing; and

- 5 Figure 9 shows a schematic plan view of a pivotal connection having spaced apart pivot axes.

Referring in more detail to Figures 1, 2 and 3, there is shown multi-compartmental gabion 1 comprising opposed side walls 2, 3 connected
10 together at spaced intervals along the length of gabion 1 by a plurality of partition walls 4, 5, 6 defining, together with side walls 2, 3, individual compartments 7, 8, 9 of multi-compartmental gabion 1. Individual compartment 8 (and other similar individual compartments) of multi-compartmental gabion 1 are bounded by opposed side wall sections 10, 11 of
15 the respective opposed side walls 2, 3. Partition walls 4, 5 (and similar partition walls) are pivotally connected to side walls 2, 3 at hinge points 12, 12'; 13, 13'.

In the embodiment shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3, each side wall section 10, 11
20 of multi-compartmental gabion 1 comprises two side wall elements 14, 14'; 15, 15' with openable pivotal connections being provided between neighbouring side wall elements 14, 14', and between neighbouring side wall elements 15, 15'.

The pivotal connections between partition walls 4, 5 (and other partition walls in the multi-compartmental gabion) and side walls 2, 3, and the openable pivotal connections between neighbouring side wall elements 14, 14'; 15, 15' allow multi-compartmental gabion 1 to fold concertina-wise for flat-packing in transportation and storage. In the embodiment shown in Figures 1, 2 and 3, the concertina-wise folding preferably operates so that the openable pivotal connections between neighbouring side wall elements 14, 14'; 15, 15' move inwardly with respect to the longitudinal axis of multi-compartmental gabion 1 so that the width of the flat-packed gabion is at least approximately corresponding to the width of partition walls, 4, 5, 6.

Referring to Figure 2, multi-compartmental gabion 1 is shown lined with geo-textile liner 21. The lining material of geo-textile liner 21 is of any suitable material, for example woven or non-woven synthetic materials; fibreglass, sisal, jute, coir. In the embodiment shown in Figure 2, the said lining material is the known geo-textile material sold by Dupont, and which is designed to allow water to pass through the material, but to prevent solid particles which are in a pasty condition from exuding through the material, even although pressed strongly there against. Geo-textile liner 21 may conveniently be folded over the top most edges of the gabion panels and stapled in place (the stapling is not shown in Figure 2).

Referring to Figure 3, individual compartments 7, 8, 9 of multi-compartmental gabion 1 are shown filled with fill material 31. Fill material 31 may be selected

from any suitable available material, as hereinbefore described. Rough earth and stones are shown as the fill material in Figure 3.

Referring to Figure 4a there is shown in schematic plan view the multi-compartmental gabion in which the pivotal connections between neighbouring compartments are indicated by multiple reference numerals 41, whilst the openable pivotal connections between neighbouring side wall elements are indicated by multiple reference numerals 42. Locking pins 43 may also be seen in Figure 4a. The partially folded gabion is shown in Figure 4b, whilst the fully folded gabion is shown in Figure 4c.

Referring to Figure 5a there is shown in schematic plan view a second form of multi-compartmental gabion 51 comprising opposed side walls 52, 53 connected together at spaced intervals along the length of gabion 51 by a plurality of partition walls 54, 55, 56 defining, together with side walls 52, 53, individual compartments 57, 58, 59 of multi-compartmental gabion 51. Individual compartment 58 (and other similar individual compartments) of multi-compartmental gabion 1 are bounded by opposed side wall sections 510, 511 of the respective opposed side walls 52, 53. Partition walls 54, 55 (and similar partition walls) are pivotally connected to side walls 52, 53 at hinge points 512, 512'; 513, 513'. However, unlike the Figure 1 gabion, each side wall section 510, 511 comprises a single side wall element 514, 515, with openable pivotal connections being provided at the junction between the side wall sections and the partition walls, and secured by locking pins 544. Figure 5b shows the gabion when locking pins 544 are removed and side wall

elements 514, 515 are moved pivotally to open the gabion compartment 58 from the side. A closed and partially folded configuration of the gabion is shown in Figure 5c. The partially folded gabion shown in Figure 5c may be folded again concertina-wise at the pivot points for flat packing and transportation. In Figure 5 there is shown an alternative embodiment of a multi-compartmental gabion in accordance with the invention, wherein each side wall section 510, 511 comprises a single side wall element 514, 515. In the embodiment shown in Figure 5, openable pivotal connections (of the type shown below in Figures 7 and 8) are provided between partition wall 55 (and other similar partition walls) and neighbouring side wall elements 514 (and other similar neighbouring side wall elements) and 515 (and other similar neighbouring side wall elements).

Referring now to Figure 6 there is shown a close-up perspective view of the pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall sections 10 and 11. For convenience in the drawing, partition wall 5 has been omitted from the close-up perspective view. However, it will be understood that partition wall 5 also shares in this particular pivotal connection in a similar fashion. Referring to Figure 6, side wall section 10 comprises an open mesh work panel 61 comprising a mesh work lattice of square apertures 62. Although the entire side wall section is not shown in Figure 6, the expanded view shows clearly the neighbouring mesh work frames of neighbouring side wall sections 10 and 11. Pivotal connection therebetween is effected by helical coil 63 which is helically threaded through the mesh apertures of the neighbouring panels. Although not shown in Figure 6, loose end 64 of helical coil 63 may be bent

round or otherwise prevented from accidentally disengaging with the top most mesh aperture of side wall section 10, 11 and weakening the pivotal connection by such disengagement.

- 5 Referring now to Figure 7, there is shown in close-up perspective view the openable pivotal connection between neighbouring side wall elements 13, 13'. In this case, both neighbouring mesh work panels are provided with helical coil members threaded helically through the mesh work panel apertures thereof. The first hinge member 71 and second member 72 are thereby
10 provided. The connected and releasably locked equivalent is shown in Figure 8, locking being effected by releasable locking pin 83.

Finally, Figure 9 shows how the gabion can be folded substantially flat for storage. The pivotal connection 90 between adjacent, say, side wall elements
15 13 consists of a pair of helical springs 71, 72 connected by way of a connection member 83 as previously described. This arrangement means that the side wall elements 13 pivot about pivot axes 91, 92 that are spaced apart by a distance d . Distance d is greater than the thickness of the side walls 13 and any protuberances (e.g. vertical wire members 93) such that the
20 side wall elements 13 can lie in a face-to-face relationship to one another.

CLAIMS

1. A gabion comprising opposed side walls comprising a plurality of side wall elements connected together at spaced intervals by a plurality of partition walls such that spaces between neighbouring pairs of partition walls define, together with the side walls, individual compartments of the gabion, adjacent side and partition walls being connected to one another by pivotal connections enabling the gabion to be folded between fully flattened and deployed configurations, wherein at least one of the pivotal connections is a releasable connection which when released allows a side wall element to open with respect to the gabion to allow access from the side of the gabion to any contents of the gabion compartments.
2. A gabion according to claim 1, wherein the releasable connection comprises a hinge member associated with an edge of each adjacent wall to be connected.
3. A gabion according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the pivotal interconnection between connected walls and/or wall elements is achieved by providing interconnected walls and/or wall elements with a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge.

4. A gabion according to claim 3 wherein a single coil member is helically threaded through the connection edge apertures of two or more neighbouring walls, wall sections and/or wall elements to achieve pivotal interconnection therebetween.
5. A gabion according to any of claims 2 to 4, wherein each hinge member is a helical spring.
6. A gabion according to any of claims 2 to 5, wherein the or each releasable connection comprises a releasable locking member releasably securing the hinge members of each pivotal connection to one another.
7. A gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 6 wherein the pivotal connections allow the gabion to fold concertina-wise for storage or transport.
8. A gabion according to claim 7, wherein the pivotal connections cause adjacent walls of the gabion to fold about a plurality of pivot axes.
9. A gabion according to claim 8, wherein the pivot axes are spaced apart to enable adjacent walls to lie face-to-face when the gabion is in a folded configuration.

10. A gabion according to any of claims 6 to 9 wherein release of the locking member allows a first neighbouring side wall element to be disconnected from a second neighbouring side wall element.
11. A gabion according to any of claims 6 to 10, wherein release of the locking member allows the first side wall element to move pivotally (by means of its pivotal connection with an opposite neighbouring side wall element) with respect to the compartment of the gabion bounded by the first neighbouring side wall element to open said compartment through the side wall of the gabion and allow access to any contents of said compartment.
12. A gabion according to any of claims 1 to 11, wherein the pivotal interconnection between connected side wall elements is releasable and is achieved by providing the interconnected side wall elements with a row of apertures along an interconnection edge thereof and by providing a first coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge of a first side wall element, a second coil member helically threaded through a plurality of apertures along the interconnection edge of a second side wall element (connected to the first side wall element along the interconnection edge) and a releasable locking member threaded through overlapped first and second coil members.

13. A gabion according to any of claims 1 to 12, wherein each side wall section comprises a single side wall element.
14. A gabion according to claim 13, wherein the releasable interconnection between neighbouring side wall elements is located between neighbouring side wall sections.
15. A gabion according to claim 14 wherein the releasable interconnection between neighbouring side wall elements and the partition wall marking the boundary between corresponding neighbouring side wall sections is openable to allow the first neighbouring side wall element to be released both from the second neighbouring side wall element and from the partition wall.
16. A gabion according to any of claims 1 to 12, wherein each side wall section comprises a plurality of side wall elements.
17. A gabion according to claim 16, wherein the releasable interconnection is provided between neighbouring side wall elements of a given side wall section.
18. A gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 17, wherein the releasable interconnection between at least a plurality of neighbouring side wall elements is provided by a hinge member

therebetween, and a releasable locking member cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the connection.

19. A gabion according to claim 18, wherein the releasable interconnection between each neighbouring side wall element is provided by a hinge member therebetween, and a releasable locking member cooperating with the hinge member releasably to secure the connection.
20. A gabion according to claim 18 or 19, wherein a first hinge member is provided on the first side wall element and a second hinge member is provided on the second neighbouring side wall element.
21. A gabion according to claim 20, wherein the releasable locking member cooperates with both first and second hinge members releasably to secure the connection.
22. A gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 21, comprising at least a plurality of compartments openable through the side wall.
23. A method for deploying a gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 22, comprising transporting the folded gabion to a deployment site, unfolding the gabion and filling each individual compartment of the gabion with a fill material.

24. A method according to claim 23, wherein the fill material is selected from sand, earth, soil, stones, rocks, rubble, concrete, debris, snow, ice and combinations of two or more thereof.
25. A method of recovering a gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 22, comprising opening up all of the openable side wall sections of the gabion, at least partly removing the fill material from the compartments, and removing the gabion from site.
26. Use of a gabion according to any one of claims 1 to 22 as a barrier against weapons assault or elemental forces.