

Screen Assembly and Clip Therefor

This invention relates to a screen assembly and in particular to a form of clip or other fastener for fastening an upright pole to a panel of such an assembly.

5 British patent specification No. 1 270 242 describes a screen assembly employing an aluminium clip which is used to fasten a member to an upright pole. The clip is provided with a resilient arcuate portion and a foot portion. The clip is secured to the tube by simply
10 snapping it onto the tube. The clip is secured to the member by a screw or bolt passing through a hole in the base of the clip.

Various other screen assemblies involving somewhat similar clips exist. A disadvantage of such systems is
15 that the clip cannot readily be detached from the panel and the position at which the clip is fixed to the panel is not readily variable.

In a form of display system currently sold by Nimlok Limited under the registered trade mark "Nimlok",
20 the panels of the display system are provided with slots. The foot portion of a clip can be fitted into a slot at a special widened portion, slid along the slot to a desired location and then clamped at that position by a grub screw provided on the clip. With this arrangement
25 the position at which the clip is fixed to the panel can

easily be varied. However, in order to vary the position the grub screw must first be loosened and then, after moving the clip to the desired position, tightened. Also special widened portions must be provided in the slot in the panel to enable the foot portion of the clip to be inserted into the slot and the clip must then be slid along the slot to its desired position. It is not possible to fix the clip at the position where the slot is widened.

While alternative systems in which the clip or another fastener was more easily fastened could readily be devised, for example by a snap fastening arrangement, a problem arises in making the fastening sufficiently secure to withstand the forces to which the display system may be subjected. For example, in the case of a clip that is used to connect a display panel to an upright supporting pole, the clip must be fastened to the panel sufficiently strongly to support the weight of the panel and any additional forces that may be applied to the panel.

It is an object of the invention to provide an improved form of screen assembly incorporating an improved fastening arrangement.

According to one aspect of the invention a screen assembly includes at least one panel with slots along its side edges, a plurality of upright poles to which the panel is fastened and a plurality of fastening elements which fasten the panel to the poles, wherein

the arrangement of the fastening elements and the panel is such that a foot portion of one of the fastening elements can be inserted into a slot and can then be rotated in the slots about an axis transverse to the slot, whereupon the foot portion becomes progressively more securely clamped in the slot and in a final position is securely clamped to the panel.

With such a screen assembly, each fastening element can be inserted into the slot at any location along the slot and with only a simple twisting movement can become firmly secured in the slot.

Each fastening element may be moulded from plastics material. This allows the element to be made at low cost and it is found that a good clamping action can be achieved with a plastics element.

Each fastening element may be arranged such that in normal use it is urged to rotate beyond said final position.

Each fastening element may have a substantially flat base to which a clamping head is connected by a neck thereby defining the foot portion, the clamping head having a width measured along a first direction less than the width of the slots and a width measured along a second direction greater than the width of the slots. The shape of the head when viewed in a direction

perpendicular to the base of the fastening element may be generally of parallelogram form with two sides of the parallelogram spaced apart by a distance greater than the width of the slots and the other two sides spaced
5 apart by a distance smaller than the width of the slots.

In an embodiment of the invention each slot is 'T' shaped with the bar of the 'T' defining an interior portion of the slot having longitudinal side walls and the stem of the 'T' defining an outer entrance portion
10 of the slot whose width is reduced by inwardly projecting lips on the panel. Each fastening element is arranged to clamp in the slot with two separate clamping actions: engagement of the foot portion with the longitudinal side walls of the slot; and, squeezing of the
15 lips between opposing faces of the base of each fastening element and the foot portion.

The base of each fastening element may include a resiliently deformable raised portion which engages one of the lips to effect the squeezing action. A slot
20 may be provided in the base of the fastening element which is able to close up to accommodate deformation of the raised portion. Two such raised portions and slots may be provided.

The fastening elements may be clips, each of which
25 has an arcuate portion arranged to snap onto a pole to

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to fasten the clip to the pole.

The assembly may include further fastening elements in the form of brackets, each bracket including a plate like portion from which a foot portion extends, the slots
5 in the panel being in confronting relationship with the poles and the bracket being such that the foot portion can be fastened in one of the slots with the plate like portion extending outwards between the adjacent panel and pole without affecting the connection between the
10 panel and pole.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a screen assembly including at least one panel with slots in its side edges, a plurality of up-
right poles and a plurality of clips, each clip
15 comprising an arcuate portion which extends around a central axis at a substantially constant radius through an angle greater than 180° and is arranged to snap onto a pole, and a foot portion for fastening in one of the slots of a panel, the arrangement of the clips and the
20 panels being such that the foot portion of the clip can be pushed into the slot with the central axis of the arcuate portion angled relative to the slot and the clip can then be rotated in the slot until the central axis of the arcuate portion becomes parallel with the slot,
25 whereupon the foot portion is securely clamped in the slot..

Preferably each clip is manually rotatable to a position where the central axis of the arcuate portion is close to being parallel with the slot and is further rotatable to the parallel position when two clips located 5 in the same slot are snapped onto a common pole. In this way a particularly strong fixing of the clip to the panel can be achieved.

According to another aspect of the invention there is provided a clip of plastics material for connecting 10 a panel to an upright pole of a screen assembly, the clip comprising a foot portion and a resilient arcuate portion which extends around a central axis at a substantially constant radius through an angle greater than 180° , the clip having a substantially flat base to which 15 a clamping head is connected by a neck, the clamping head having an overall width measured in a direction perpendicular to the central axis of the arcuate portion greater than the overall width measured in a direction inclined to said perpendicular direction.

20 By way of example, an embodiment of the invention will now be described with reference to the accompanying drawings, of which:

Figure 1 is a perspective view of a screen assembly,
Figure 2 is a perspective view of a clip used in
25 constructing the assembly of Figure 1,
Figure 3 is a side view of the clip,
Figure 4 is an end view of the clip,

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Figure 5 is an underneath view of the clip,
Figure 6 is a top view of the clip,
Figure 7 is a detailed view of part of the screen
assembly of Figure 1,

Figure 8 is a view along the line III-III of
Figure 7,

Figure 9 is a view along the line IV-IV of
Figure 7,

5 Figure 10 is an underneath plan view of an
 advantageous form of clip,

Figure 11 is a side view showing a shelf support
fixed by a bracket to the screen assembly
of Figure 1,

10 Figure 12 is a sectional view along the line
 XII-XII of Figure 11,

Figure 13 is a side view of the bracket,

Figure 14 is an end view of the bracket, and

Figure 15 is a plan view of the bracket.

15 The screen assembly shown in Figure 1 comprises
a panel 1, a pair of upright poles 2 secured in
stands 3 and clips 4 fastening the panels 1 to the
poles 2.

Referring in particular to Figures 7 and 8, each
20 panel 1 has a central area bordered by an aluminium
alloy extrusion 10 which provides a rigid frame for
the panel and whose section is shown most clearly in

Figure 8. The extrusion has channels 16 in which the edges of the central panel parts are received. The construction of the panel itself is not material to the invention and will not be described further. In Figures 5 7 and 8, for the sake of clarity, only the extrusion part of the panel is shown.

Referring to Figures 2 to 6, the clip 4 has a foot portion defined by a clamping head 6 connected to an arcuate portion 7 by a neck 8. The arcuate portion 7 10 extends around a central axis at a substantially constant radius through an angle of about 215° and is a snap fit on the pole 2. The clamping head 6 is of parallelogram form with parallel sides 13 of the head spaced apart by a distance greater than the sides 14 of the head. 15 Inclined faces on the top of the head 6 extend upwardly to the neck 8 which is again of parallelogram form. The inclined faces adjoining the sides 13 are designated by the reference numeral 18 in the drawings.

The clip has a base 17 which is generally flat but 20 which has two opposite progressively raised portions 21. A pair of slots 22 are formed in the base 17 underneath each of the raised portions 21.

The clip 4 is moulded from plastics material. In one particular example of the invention the clip 4 is 25 made of a nylon (polyamide material) known as Grilon (Trade Mark) and including 15 per cent by weight of

glass.

Referring now to Figures 7 and 8, which show the clip 4 attached to a panel 1, the clamping head 6 is received in a slot 9 formed in the extrusion 10. As shown in Figure 8, the slot 9 is 'T' shaped with the bar of the 'T' defining an interior portion 11 of the slot and the stem of the 'T' defining an outer entrance portion whose width is reduced by inwardly projecting lips 12 on the extrusion. The separation of the sides 14 of the head 6 is less than the width of the entrance portion of the slot 9 and the separation of the sides 13 is such that they can just be fitted between the side walls 15 defining the interior portion 11 of the slot. Similarly the neck 8 of parallelogram form is dimensioned such that it can just be fitted between the edges of the lips 12.

The lips 12 have a thickness greater than the spacing between the raised portions 21 and the opposing inclined faces 18 of the head 6 but owing to the slots 22, the raised portions 21 are able to flex away from the inclined faces 18 into the slots 22 to accommodate the lips 12.

In order to attach the clip 4 to the panel, the clip is presented to the extrusion 10 at about the chosen position for attachment, with the clip oriented as shown in chain dotted outline in Figure 9. In

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this position the sides 14 of the head are parallel with the slot and the head can therefore be inserted between the lips 12 of the slot until the base 17 of the clip bears against the extrusion. If necessary, the clip can then be slid along the slot to its exact desired location. The clip is then rotated anti-clockwise, as seen from behind as in Figure 9, through an angle of 45 degrees to the solid line position shown in Figure 9 in which the clip is firmly locked to the extrusion. It will be seen that substantial further rotation of the clip is impossible owing to the engagement of the sides 13 with the walls 15 of the slot and the engagement of the sides 18 with the lips 12. The clip is secured in this position by progressive squeezing of the lips 12 between the base 17 and the inclined faces 18 of the head 6 as the clip is rotated into its clamped position. This clamping action ensures that the clip is fastened very firmly to the extrusion. Furthermore since the clamping parts of the clip undergo a substantial deformation during clamping the effectiveness of the clamping is not too dependent on the exact dimensions of the extrusion and considerable tolerances in the extrusion are allowable.

Once the clip 4 is secured to the panel 1 the panel can be secured to the pole 2 simply by snapping the arcuate portion of the clip onto the pole. The

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relative sizing of the arcuate portion of the clip and the pole is quite critical to achieving a fastening which can easily and repeatedly be made or released and which when made is secure. In one particular
5 embodiment, the pole has an external diameter of 32 mm and the distal ends of the arcuate portion of the clip are spaced apart by 27.3 mm.

In order to dismantle the screen assembly the parts can be separated by following the procedure
10 described above in reverse.

While Figure 1 shows a single screen assembly consisting of one panel and a pair of upright poles 2 it is possible to extend this assembly without limit. One or more further panels may be attached to either
15 of the poles shown in Figure 1, with the clips of the panels secured to the poles at different levels. In this way a screen assembly consisting of, for example, a hexagon of panels may be assembled. It is also possible to extend the height of the poles, for example
20 in the manner described in British patent specification No. 1 270 242, and further panels can be attached at a higher level.

Fig. 10 illustrates an advantageous form of the clip in which the sides 13 of the clamping head 6
25 are provided with protruding pips 23, whose spacing perpendicular to the axis of the clip is slightly

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greater than the separation of the side walls 15. The effect of this inclination is that when the clamping head is rotated to a position in which the pips 23 engage the side walls 15, the clip is still slightly misaligned with the extrusion 10. When a pair of clips are attached to the extrusion 10 and subsequently fastened to a pole 2, they are forced into alignment with the pole and therefore also with the extrusion 10. The effect of this is to force the protruding pips 23 strongly against the walls 15 of the slot and thereby enhance the fixing of the clip to the extrusion. It will be understood that as an alternative to providing pips the sides 13 may be inclined outwardly at the ends where the pips would be provided.

15 In the embodiment described above the clamping head 6 is arranged so that the clip is rotated anti-clockwise, as seen from behind as in Figure 9, to secure the clip. It will be understood that the head 6 could alternatively be arranged as a mirror image of that shown so that the clip would be rotated clockwise, as seen from behind, to secure the clip.

20 It is thus possible to provide a screen assembly which can very quickly be assembled and dismantled. The screen assembly is particularly suitable for providing a display or presentation.

25 Accessories, such as light fittings, shelves and table tops may be provided in addition to the panels, poles, stands and clips. Figures 11 to 15 illustrate

how a shelf support 30 can be attached to the screen assembly by a bracket 31. Referring primarily to Figures 13 to 15, the bracket 31 is made in one piece of plastics material and comprises a main plate-like part 32 to which a foot portion defined by a clamping head 6 is secured, a subsidiary plate-like part 33, a straight bridge 34 and a bridge 35 of 'U' cross-section, the two bridges holding the parts 32, 33 in spaced parallel relationship. The clamping head of the bracket 31 is substantially the same as the clamping head of the clip previously described and the same reference numerals are used to designate corresponding parts.

The shelf support 30 is of generally right angled triangular shape, is made in one piece of plastics material and has a central panel 36 around the periphery of which a double flange 37 is provided. Along its shortest side an opening 41 leading into a recess 38 is provided in the panel. The recess has two opposite curved ends 39, 40 each of which match the 'U' cross-section of the bridge 35.

To attach the shelf support to the screen assembly the bracket 31 is first attached to the panel 1. The bracket is introduced with the end carrying the clamping head 6 as the leading end between the panel 1 and the adjacent pole 2. It will be noted that the width of the leading end of the bracket is relatively small and this enables it to pass between the pole and

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the panel. Once the clamping head 6 is located in the gap between the panel 1 and the adjacent pole 2 it can be introduced into the slot 9 with the bracket tilted clockwise from the position shown in Figure 13; 5 as it is then rotated back to the orientation shown in Figure 13, it progressively squeezes the lips 12 of the extrusion 10 and thus fastens the bracket to the extrusion.

The shelf support is then fitted on to the bracket 10 by passing the opening 41 in its shortest side over the bridge 35 and then allowing the support to slide downwardly until the bridge 35 rests against the curved end 39 of the recess. This position of the parts is shown in Figure 11. It will be seen that any 15 downward pressure on the shelf support urges the bracket to rotate further in the fastening direction and therefore enhances the clamping of the bracket to the panel.

It will be understood that in use brackets and shelf 20 supports would be used in pairs and connected to opposite side edges of a panel. A shelf (not shown) would be placed on top of the supports and for this purpose locating pips 42 are provided on the double flange 37 to engage in corresponding recesses in the 25 shelf and a lip 43 is provided to hold down one edge of the shelf. As can be seen from Figure 11 the shelf can, if desired, be used the opposite way up; in this case the bridge 35 rests against the curved end 40 of

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the recess and a sloping shelf support is provided with pips 42 and a lip 43 for locating a shelf thereon.

While the shelf supports 30 on opposite sides of the panel are of identical construction it will be appreciated that "right hand" and "left hand" brackets 31 have to be provided for the opposite sides of the panel. If desired the brackets may be marked to indicate whether they are "right hand" or "left hand".

In the drawings a shelf support 30 is shown fastened to the bracket 31 but it should be understood that other devices, for example lights could be secured to the brackets. Also such devices may incorporate a bracket such as the bracket 31 as an integral part rather than as a separate component.

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Claims:

1. A screen assembly including at least one panel with slots along its side edges, a plurality of upright poles to which the panel is fastened and a plurality of
5 fastening elements which fasten the panel to the poles, wherein the arrangement of the fastening elements and the panel is such that a foot portion of one of the fastening elements can be inserted into a slot and can then be rotated in the slot about an axis transverse to
10 the slot, whereupon the foot portion becomes progressively more securely clamped in the slot and in a final position is securely clamped to the panel.
2. An assembly as claimed in claim 1 in which each fastening element is arranged such that in normal use it
15 is urged to rotate beyond said final position.
3. An assembly as claimed in claim 1 or 2 in which each fastening element has a substantially flat base to which a clamping head is connected by a neck thereby defining the foot portion, the clamping head
20 having a width measured along a first direction less than the width of the slots and a width measured along a second direction greater than the width of the slots.
4. An assembly as claimed in claim 3 in which the head when viewed in a direction perpendicular to the
25 base of the fastening element is generally of parallelogram form with two sides of the parallelogram



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spaced apart by a distance greater than the width of the slots and the other two sides spaced apart by a distance smaller than the width of the slots.

5. An assembly as claimed in any preceding claim in which each slot is 'T' shaped with the bar of the 'T' defining an interior portion of the slot having longitudinal side walls and the stem of the 'T' defining an outer entrance portion of the slot whose width is reduced by inwardly projecting lips on the panel.
- 10 6. An assembly as claimed in claim 5 in which a clamping action is provided by engagement of the foot portion with the longitudinal side walls of the slot.
7. An assembly as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6 in which a clamping action is provided by squeezing of
15 the lips between opposing faces of the base of each fastening element and the foot portion.
8. An assembly as claimed in claim 7 in which the base of each fastening element includes a resiliently deformable raised portion which engages one of the lips
20 to effect the squeezing action.
9. An assembly as claimed in claim 8 in which a slot is provided in the base of the fastening element which is able to close up to accommodate deformation of the raised portion.
- 25 10. An assembly as claimed in any preceding claim in which each fastening element is moulded from plastics material.



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11. An assembly as claimed in any preceding claim in which the fastening elements are clips, each of which has an arcuate portion arranged to snap onto a pole to fasten the clip to the pole.

5 12. An assembly as claimed in any preceding claim including further fastening elements in the form of brackets, each bracket including a plate like portion from which a foot portion extends, the slots in the panel being in confronting relationship with the poles
10 and the bracket being such that the foot portion can be fastened in one of the slots with the plate like portion extending outwards between the adjacent panel and pole without affecting the connection between the panel and pole.

15 13. An assembly as claimed in claim 12 in which shelf supports are fastened to the brackets.

14. An assembly as claimed in claim 12 or 13 in which the foot portion of each of the brackets comprises a clamping head connected to the plate like portion by
20 a neck, the clamping head having a width measured along a first direction less than the width of the slots and a width measured along a second direction greater than the width of the slots.

15. An assembly as claimed in claim 14 in which the
25 clamping head when viewed in a direction perpendicular to the plate like portion is generally of parallelogram form with two sides of the parellelogram spaced apart



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by a distance greater than the width of the slots and the other two sides spaced apart by a distance smaller than the width of the slots.

16. A screen assembly including at least one panel
5 with slots along its side edges, a plurality of upright poles and a plurality of clips, each clip comprising an arcuate portion which extends around a central axis at a substantially constant radius
10 through an angle greater than 180° and is arranged to snap onto a pole, and a foot portion for fastening in one of the slots of a panel, the arrangement of the clips and the panels being such that the foot portion of the clip can be pushed into the slots with the central axis of the arcuate portion angled relative to
15 the slot and the clip can then be rotated in the slot until the central axis of the arcuate portion becomes parallel with the slot, whereupon the foot portion is securely clamped in the slot.

17. An assembly as claimed in claim 16 in which each
20 clip is manually rotatable to a position where the central axis of the arcuate portion is close to being parallel with the slot and is further rotatable to the parallel position when two clips located in the same slot are snapped onto a common pole.

25 18. A clip of plastics material for connecting a panel to an upright pole of a screen assembly, the clip comprising a foot portion and a resilient arcuate



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portion which extends around a central axis at a substantially constant radius through an angle greater than 180° , the clip having a substantially flat base to which a clamping head is connected by a neck, the clamping head having an overall width measured in a direction perpendicular to the central axis of the arcuate portion greater than the overall width measured in a direction inclined to said perpendicular direction.

19. A clip as claimed in claim 18 wherein the clamping head when viewed in a direction perpendicular to the base of the clip is generally of parallelogram form with two sides of the parallelogram substantially parallel to the central axis of the arcuate portion of the clip and spaced apart by a distance greater than the spacing of the other two sides of the parallelogram.

20. A screen assembly substantially as herein described with reference to and as illustrated by the accompanying drawings.

21. A clip substantially as herein described with reference to and as illustrated by Figures 1 to 10 of the accompanying drawings.