



A PANEL SYSTEM AND A PANELLING MEMBER THEREFOR

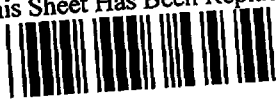
The present invention relates to panel systems, for example, but not exclusively, ceiling panel systems for false ceilings, panelling members to be made up into such panel systems and methods of manufacturing and installing the panel and panelling members.

Prefabricated panels are commonly used to form ceilings or walls and in many other places. Such panels are commonly made of sheets of material, for example aluminium alloy, and it is generally desirable to reduce the thickness of the panelling material so as to reduce its cost and weight. Reduction of thickness is however restricted by the necessity to retain sufficient strength and rigidity. It is also desirable that the panel is cheap to manufacture and easy to assemble in numerous different applications.

Accordingly the present invention provides a panelling member comprising at least two elongate sheet members hingedly joined along adjacent edges.

The sheet members are hingedly joined so that the panelling member can be folded or laid flat. When folded it will be rigid but when flat may be coiled. The present invention thus provides a panelling member which is easy to manufacture and may be readily stored and transported whilst rolled. The panelling member of the invention may be easily installed by unrolling it and hanging it on an appropriate carrier. If provided in long lengths it can be cut to fit on site so that there is no waste scrap.

The sheet members may be joined by strips of suitable flexible material such as plastic or fabric adhered or welded



to the sheet members. They may also have a curved lateral cross section side by side.

The widths of the different elongate sheet members may be different, with central ones preferably wider. Decoration or
5 perforation may be applied as desired for the particular application. The sheet members are preferably relatively rigid and may be made of, for example, aluminium alloy, other metals or rigid plastics type materials. The invention also provides a panel system comprising at least one panelling member mounted
10 on a carrier.

When mounted on the carrier the or each central sheet member of the or each panelling member forms the outer surface of the panel while side sheet members are turned inwards for connection to the carrier and to provide rigidity.

15 The panelling member may be easily made in long lengths by drawing strips of the sheet material off rolls, bringing them side by side and applying a flexible connecting strip, such as an adhesive tape, along the join to form the hinge. With the multiple sheet members still retained generally
20 coplanar, the panelling member may be easily coiled for ease of storage or transportation, but on installation, when the free edges are moved towards one another by folding the joint, sufficient rigidity is imparted to retain an elongate straight structure.

25 The present invention will be further described hereinafter with reference to the following description of exemplary embodiments and the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a cross-sectional view of an embodiment of a panelling member according to the invention in a flat state;

Figure 2 is a cross-section of the panelling member of Fig. 1 in a folded state;

Figure 3 is a schematic diagram of an assembly line for manufacturing panelling members according to the invention;

5 Figure 4 is a sectional view of a false ceiling constructed from panelling members according to the invention;

Figure 5 is a close-up view of part of Fig 4 showing how the panelling members are attached to carriers;

Figure 6 is a view of an alternative method of fixing
10 panelling members to the carrier;

Figures 7 a) to f) are sectional views of how panels may be constructed from a plurality of panelling members;

Figures 7 g) to l) are perspective views of example ceilings formed from panelling members according to embodiments
15 of the invention;

Figure 8 is a schematic view of how the false ceiling may be constructed using panelling members according to the invention;

Figures 9, 10 and 11 are cross-sectional views of false
20 ceilings according to an embodiment of the invention;

Figure 12a) shows a blank to be formed into a carrier for use in the invention;

Figure 12b) shows that carrier when folded;

Figure 12c) is an enlarged view of a part of that
25 carrier;

Figure 13a) shows a blank to be formed into another carrier for use in the invention;

Figure 13b) is an enlarged view of a part of that carrier;





Figures 14a) and b) are side views of a further carrier for use in the invention and Figure 14c is a side view of that carrier; and

Figures 15a) and b) show the two components of a still further carrier according to the invention and that carrier as assembled.

Figure 1 is a cross-section of an embodiment of a panelling member according to the invention in a flat state. It comprises three curved metal slats, 1, 2 and 3 joined together by flexible tape 4. The panelling member according to the invention may also comprise only two slats. The slats are preferably made from aluminium alloy and the adhesive tape from a plastics material. The middle slat 1 is considerably wider than the outer slats 2 and 3. Figure 2 shows the same slat in cross-section when the side slats 2, 3 are folded upwards so as to form a channel. While in the Figure 1 configuration the panelling member is quite flexible and may be coiled for ease of storage, however when in the Figure 2 configuration it is much more rigid, sufficiently so to form a panel or part of a false ceiling.

Figure 3 illustrates how the panelling member can be constructed. The centre slat 1 is unrolled from a roll 5 and the side slats 2, 3 are unrolled from rolls 6 and brought alongside the centre slat at rollers 8. If the slats are already crowned then rollers 8 may simply guide them together, however if they are supplied flat rollers 8 may cold roll them into the desired cross-section. The adhesive tape 4 is supplied from a roll 7 and pressed onto the join at rollers 9. The complete slat may then pass through a perforating station



11 which punches any holes desired for mounting or ventilation purposes and a decorating station 12 which may apply any necessary surface finish or coating. The finished product is then rolled onto roll 10 or alternatively may be cut into 5 lengths.

Figure 4 shows a false ceiling constructed using panelling members according to the invention. A carrier 13 is suspended from the true ceiling 14 at the desired height and perpendicular to the direction the elongate panelling members 10 are to be arrayed. The carrier 13 has regularly spaced mounting points along its length onto which the lengths 16 of panelling are hung. Figure 5 shows a carrier 13 and mounting points 15 in greater detail. The carrier 13 comprises an elongate inverted channel and the mounting points comprise 15 notches 16 cut up into the side walls with a barbed projection 17 pointing downwards. During mounting of the panelling member, the free edges of the side slats are introduced into the notches 16 and slots 21 therein hook onto the barbs of the projection 17. The shape and width of the notches 15 relative 20 to the side slats is chosen such that the side walls engage the opposite sides of the notches from the barbs to retain the slots 21 on the projection 17 and prevent movement of the side slats relative to the carrier

Figure 6 shows an alternative construction of the 25 mounting point in which a single barb 19 is provided on one side of the notch 18 onto which are hung the side slats of two adjacent panelling members. As with the arrangement of figure 5, the notch is shaped to receive and retain the side slats. Alternatively a barb might be provided on each side of the



notch. Many alternative constructions of the carrier are possible, for example it might comprise a long bar with appropriately spaced barbed projections depending therefrom.

Figures 7 a) to f) illustrate potential variations in form of ceilings that can be provided with different panelling members. In Figure 7a) the centre slat of each panelling member is concave downwards while the side slats are convex facing one another. In 7b) the centre slats are convex downwards while the side slats alternate concave convex so as to nestle together more closely. 7c) is similar but the centre slats are concave downwards. In Figure 7d) the centre and side slats all have the same curvature but the side slats are overlapped and joined together rather than being hinged upwards.

Figure 7 e) illustrates possible effects which may be achieved with panelling members alternately having convex and concave centre slats. Figure 7f) illustrates effects that may be achieved or with panelling members having centre slats of different widths.

Figures 7g) to l) are perspective views of ceilings constructed from arrangements of panelling members similar to the panels of Figures 7a) to f). Figure 7g) is a perspective view showing "open" joints between panelling members with three convex slabs. The arrangement in Figure 7h) is similar but in this case the middle slat of each parallel member is concave. The side slats are still convex to produce "open" joints.

Figure 7i) illustrates the "wave" effect achievable with alternate panel members having convex and concave central slats, in this case all of the side slats are concave to



produce "open" joints.

Figures 7j) to l) show similar arrangements to Figs. 7f) to i) but with "closed" joints formed by using panel members with side slats curved in opposite senses. The concave side
5 slat of one panel member nests in the convex side slat of the adjacent panel member so as to provide a continuous outer surface.

Figure 8 shows how a false ceiling using panelling members according to the invention may be put up. First the
10 carriers 13 are hung from the ceiling and then panelling member is unrolled from a roll 10, the sides hinged up and hung on the carriers. The roll 10 is provided on a trolley 20 which is then wheeled along as the panelling member is paid out and hooked onto the carriers.

15 The invention may also provide stiffening members with three or more similarly sized slats which can be folded to have a closed cross-section, in which form it is very rigid, and can be laid out flat for rolling or storage.

A length of panelling member may be formed of several
20 simple three part members joined side by side in any of the arrangements shown above.

Figure 9 shows in cross-section a false ceiling according to the invention similar to that shown in Figure 5. In this embodiment the panel member 16 is constructed from a convex
25 central slat and two side slats 2 and 3 one of which is convex and the other concave. Adjacent panelling members nest to provide a closed joint and the two side slats engage the barred projection 17. An additional detent projection 23 is provided on the side of notch 15 to engage the side slats of the panel



members and hold them onto the barbed projection. Two adjacent side slats are engaged to one of slots formed on one side of the barbed projection.

Figure 10 shows a similar arrangement using the same carrier but in which all slats of the panel member are convex so as to provide "open" joints, and one side slat is engaged in each of the two slots formed beside the barbed projection.

Figure 11 is a still further similar embodiment in which different panelling members are combined on the same carrier as in Figures 9 and 10 so as to produce a desired arrangement of open and closed joints.

Figures 12a) to c) show a carrier which may be used with panelling members described above to form a false ceiling. Figure 12a shows how notches are cut into the flat blank whilst Figure 12b illustrates how that blank is folded by roll forming to form the channel shaped carrier. The notches cut on alternate sides of the blank are asymmetrical so that when folded a side slat hanging on barb 24 is held in place by detent 25 provided on the opposite side of the carrier. Figure 12c is an enlarged side view of the folded carrier showing how the two notches cooperate to form two barb and detent pairs for holding side slats. This form of notch is advantageous in that it may be cut with a more sturdy punching tool.

Figure 13a shows the blank of a further form of carrier according to the invention, again with asymmetric notches. In this instance two barbs 24 are provided on one side and two detent members on the other. As will be seen in Figure 13b, which is an enlarged view showing how the notches will overlap once the blank is folded into a channel section, these will



cooperate to retain a side slat. The two forms of notch shown in this figure may be alternated on each side so as to eliminate any tendency of the long carrier to tilt.

A still further form of carrier is shown in Figures 14a) to c). As will be seen the notch 15 in the carrier is very deep and has gently sloping sides. A relatively short barbed projection 19 is provided at the base of each notch. The curved relatively gently sloped sides of the notch 15 serve to guide the side slats 2 and 3 on to the projections during assembly. As shown in Figure 14a) members having alternate convex and concave central slats are provided so as to form a wavy appearance. All of the side slats 2 and 3 are concave and engage opposite sides of the barbed projection so as to provide "open" joints. In Figure 14b all of the central slats are convex but the side slats alternate concave and convex and engage the same side of the barbed projection so as to form "closed" joints.

As shown in Figure 14c the carrier itself is asymmetric. Only one of the depending flanges bears notches and the other is cut off short so as not to project below the top of the notches in the other flange.

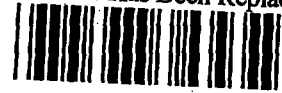
A still further example of a carrier according to the invention is shown in Figures 15a) and b). This carrier comprises two separate components both formed from a flat strip of metal or plastic. The first component 26 has notches 15 and 19 cut at regular intervals into its lower edge and from its upper edge has projections 27 having holes 28 therein projecting upwards. The notches and barbed projections are preferably the same shape as in the embodiment of Figures 14a)

and b). The upper projections 27 are also provided at regular intervals, but not necessarily the same as the lower notches. The second component 29 comprises a flat strip having apertures 30 at regular intervals matching those of the projections 27 on the first component. Both the first and second component may be coiled for easy storage and on assembly they are unrolled. The projections 27 are passed through the apertures 30 to form a composite body having sufficient rigidity. Some of the projections 27 are used to hang the carrier, the remainder may be bent or twisted sideways to hold the two components together.

Because the two parts of this form of carrier may be rolled when separate they share the same advantages as the panelling member of the invention. For example, they are easy to manufacture, easy to transport and store when rolled and may be quickly and conveniently assembled without generating scrap.

This Sheet Has Been Replaced





CLAIMS

1. A panelling member comprising at least two elongate sheet members (1, 2, 3) side by side and hingedly joined (4) along adjacent edges.

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2. A panelling member according to claim 1 wherein said hinged joins comprise at least one strip of flexible material (4) adhered to both sheet members.

3. A panelling member according to claim 2 wherein said flexible material is a plastics material.

15 4. A panelling member according to claim 2 wherein said flexible material is a fabric.

5. A panelling member according to any one of the preceding claims wherein at least one of said sheet members (1, 2, 3) is made from metal, preferably an aluminium alloy.

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6. A panelling member according to any one of the preceding claims comprising an odd number of sheet members (1, 2, 3) and wherein at least a central one (1) of said sheet members is wider than the others.

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7. A panelling member according to any one of the preceding claims wherein at least one of said sheet members is decorated or perforated.





8. A panelling member according to any one of the preceding claims wherein one or more of the sheet members (1, 2, 3) has a curved lateral cross-section.

5 9. A panelling member according to claim 8 wherein at least two of said sheet members (1, 2, 3) are laterally curved in the same sense.

10 10. A panelling member according to claim 8 wherein at least two of said sheet members are laterally curved in different senses (Figs 7a, b, c, e, f).

11. A carrier for a panel member comprising at least one flange having at least one notch in an edge thereof, said notch
15 being shaped to receive the side slat of a panel member and having therein a barbed projection to engage an aperture on said side slat of said panel member.

12. A carrier according to claim 11 wherein said barbed
20 projections (17) project from the deepest parts of said notches.

13. A carrier according to claim 11 wherein said barbed projections project from sides of said notches.

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14. A carrier according to claim 11, 12 or 13 wherein said barbed projections are not as long as said notches are deep.

15. A carrier according to any one of claims 11 to 14 wherein





said carrier comprises a flexible elongate web having said notches in an edge thereof and detachable stiffening means.

16. A panel system comprising at least one panelling member
5 according to any one of the preceding claims (16) and a carrier
(13) according to claims 11, 12, 13 14 or 15 for holding the or
each panelling member.

17. A panel system according to claim 16 wherein the or each
10 panelling member (16) has at least three sheet members (1, 2,
3) and said carrier (13) holds at least one side sheet member
(3, 2) of the or each panelling member so as to present at
least a central one (1) of said sheet members as an outer
surface of the panel system.

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18. A panel system according to claim 17 wherein plural
central sheet members (1) of one or more panelling members (16)
are held generally coplanar.

20 19. A method of manufacturing a panelling member comprising
placing at least two elongate sheet members (1, 2, 3) side by
side and applying at least one flexible material (4) across the
or each join to hingedly connect the sheet members.

25 20. A method according to claim 19 wherein said flexible
material is an adhesive tape.

21. A method of installing a panelling member (16) comprising
at least to elongate sheet members (1, 2, 3) side by side and





hingedly joined (4) along adjacent edges, the method comprising the steps of: unrolling said panelling member in a flat configuration, moving the free edges thereof together to impart rigidity and installing the panelling member in a desired
5 position.

22. A method according to claim 21 comprising the further step of mounting the rigid panelling member (16) on a carrier (13).

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23. A method according to claim 21 or 22 comprising the further step of cutting said panelling member into lengths.

