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(54) **PARKING METER**

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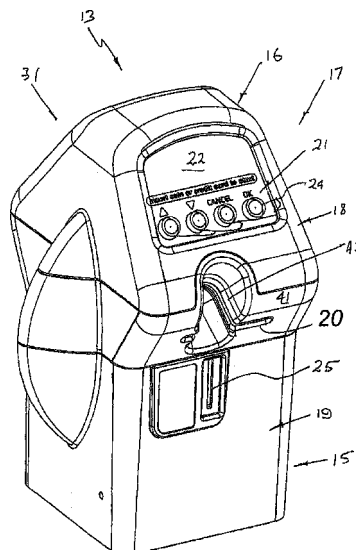
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A parking meter assembly (10) including a base (11) that is to
be fixed to or embedded in a ground surface, typically adja-
cent the curb that which a car is to be parked. The assembly
(10) also includes a parking meter (13) having a front face
(17) that includes a coin slot (25) a card slot (20) and a control
panel (21). The parking meter (13) further includes a rear face
(27) having a window aperture (28) that provides for the
transmission of light to a solar panel (29) behind the aperture
(28).

12 Claims, 5 Drawing Sheets



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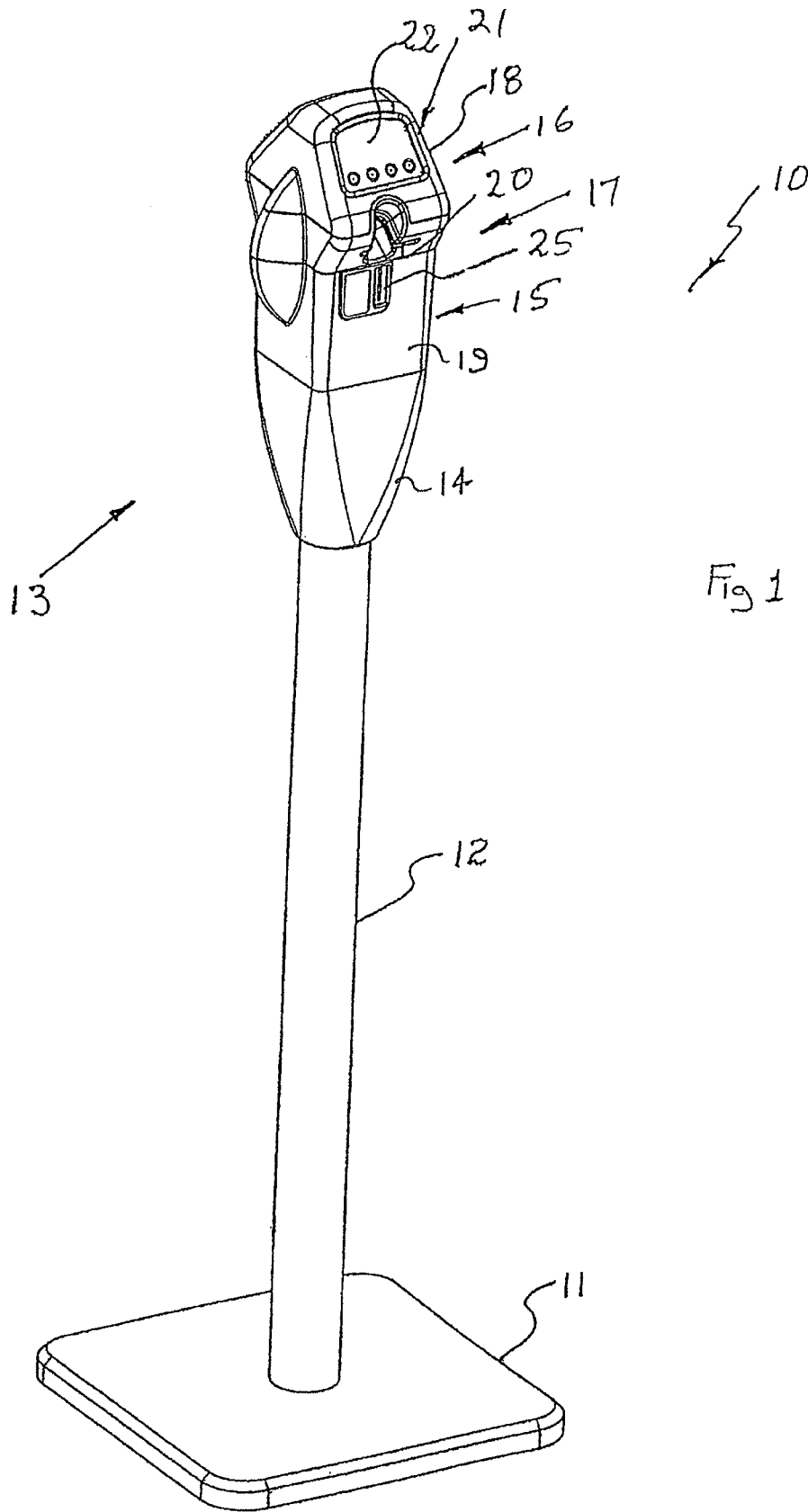
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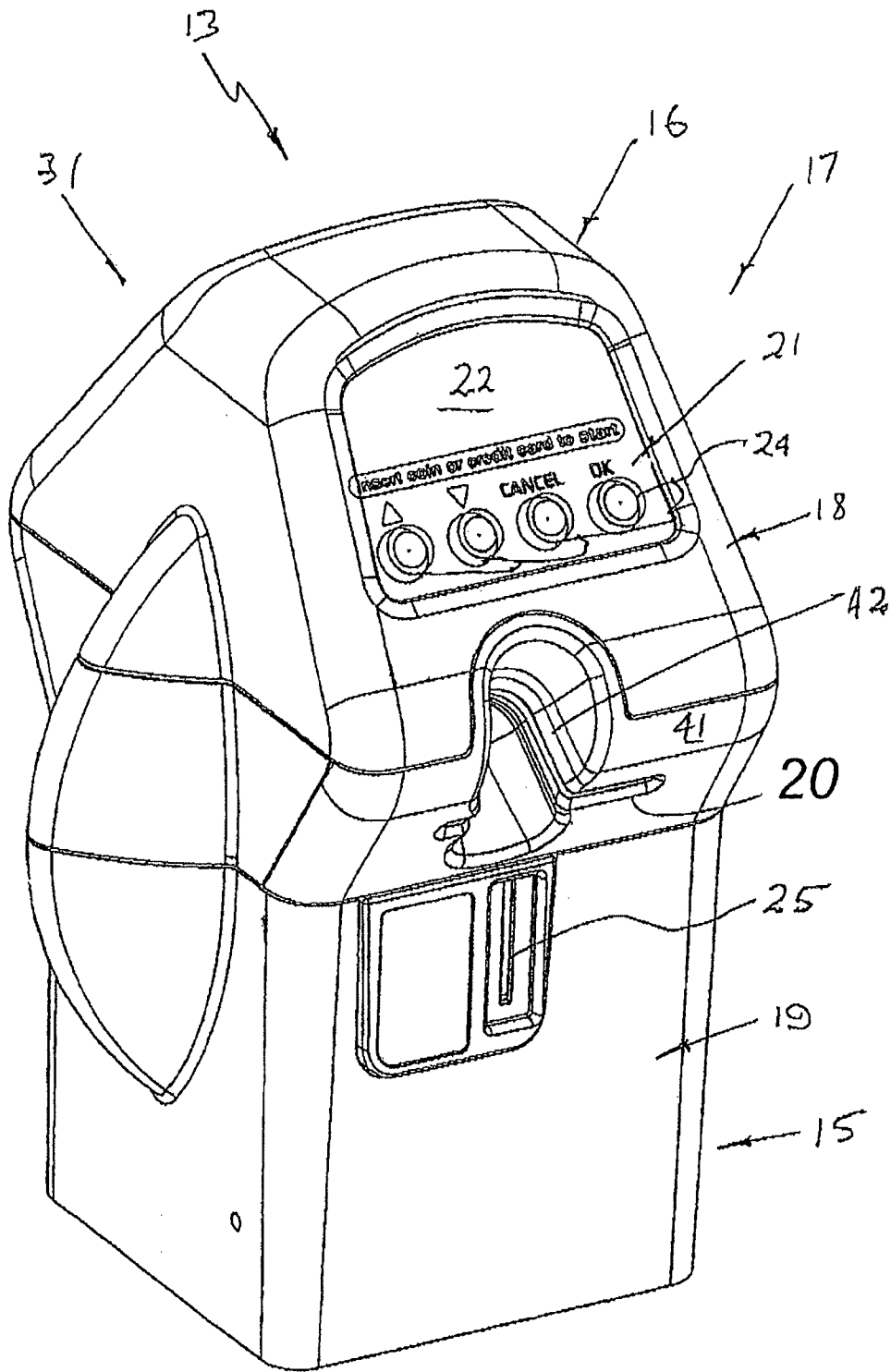
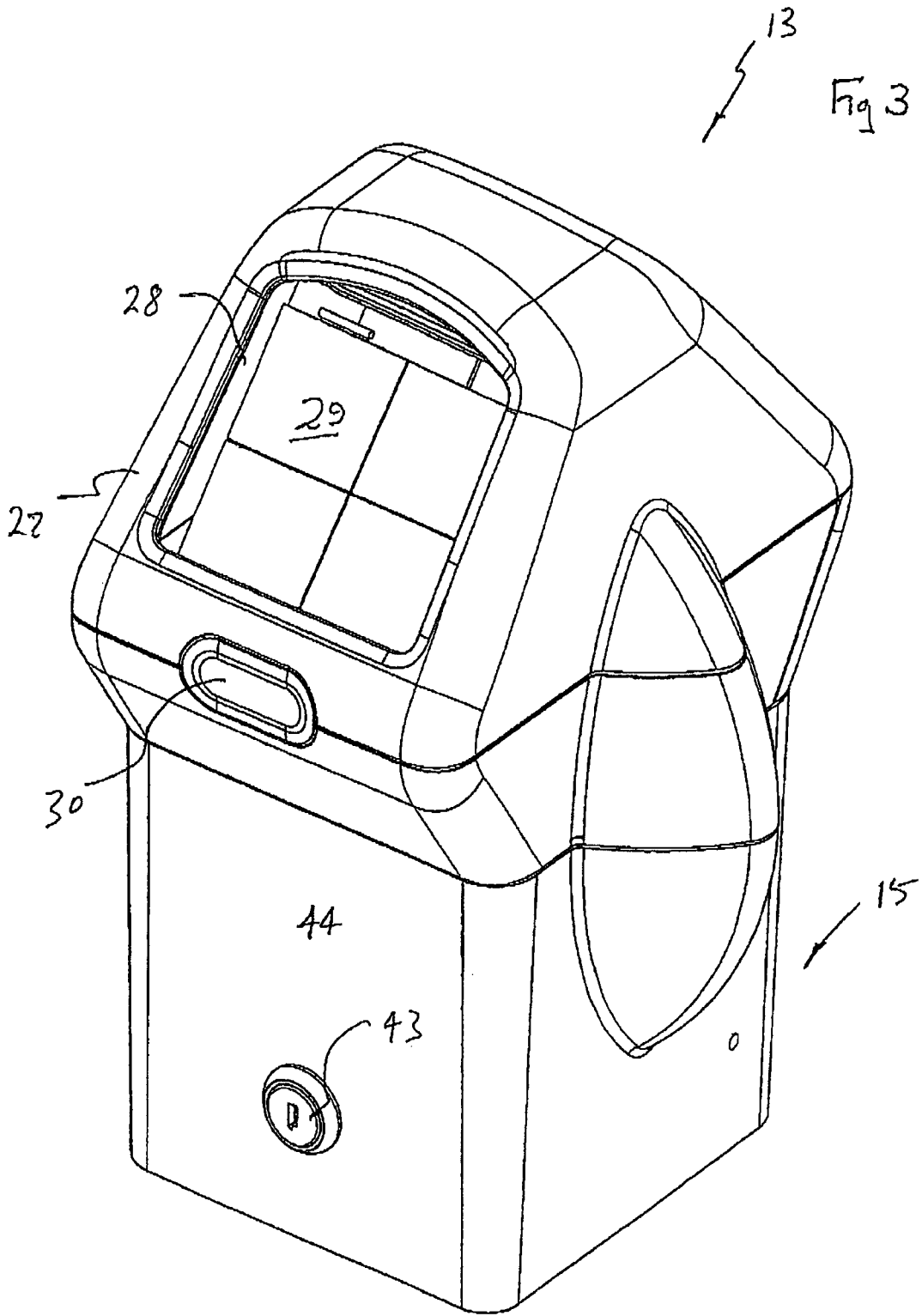
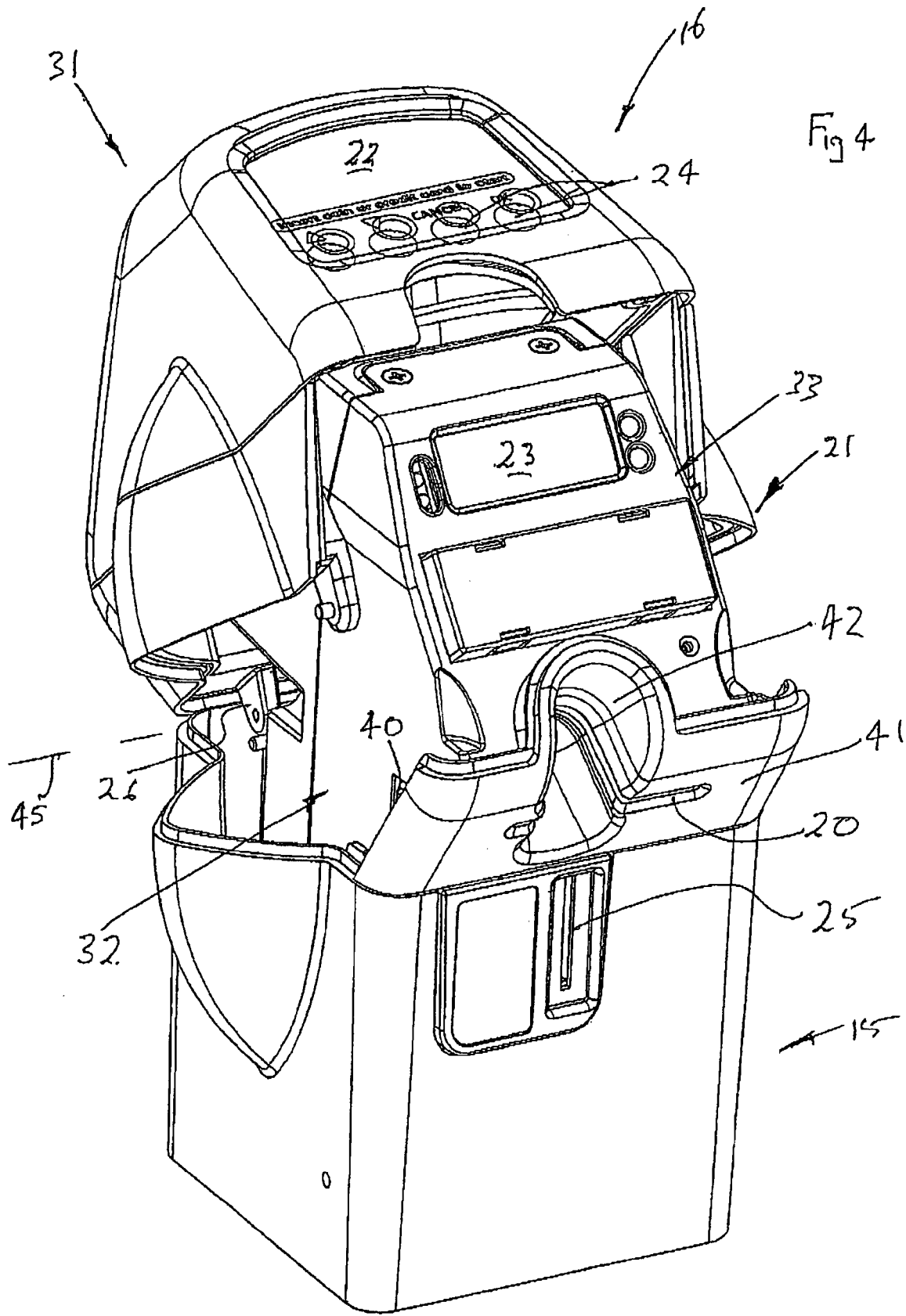
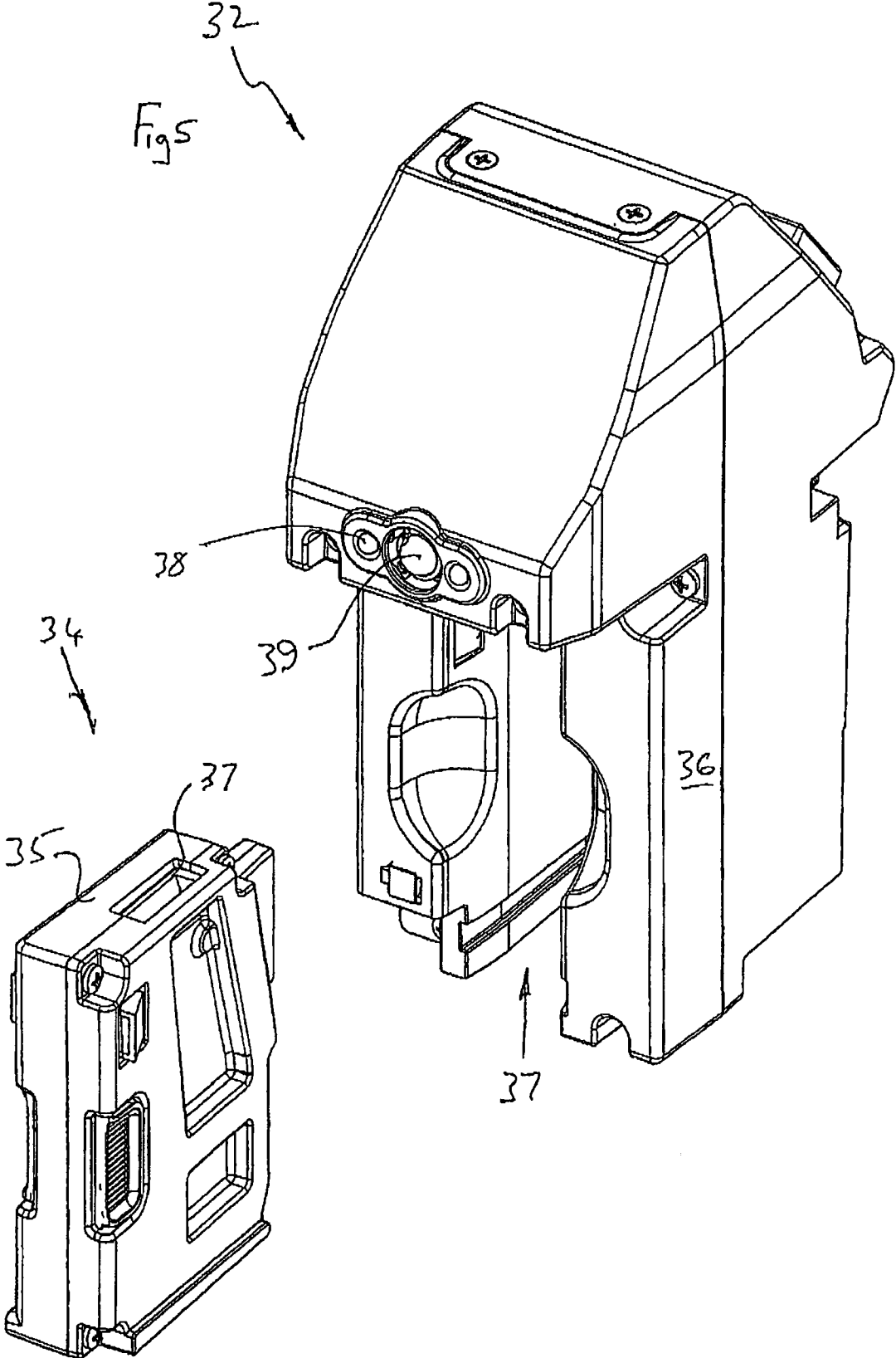


Fig 2







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PARKING METER

CROSS-REFERENCES TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation application of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 12/072,524 filed Feb. 27, 2008, entitled "PARKING METER" (now U.S. Pat. No. 7,854,310 issued Dec. 21, 2010), which claims priority to Australian Patent Application 2007900999 filed Feb. 27, 2007. The disclosures of these applications are hereby incorporated by reference, as if set forth in full in this document, for all purposes.

TECHNICAL FIELD

The present invention relates to parking meters and more particularly to electrically powered parking meters.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Parking meters initially were coin operated. They were known to consist of a module to be fixed to a post having a lower end embedded in a ground surface typically adjacent a kerb adjacent which vehicles were to be parked. The parking meters were operated by inserting a coin and then turning a knob to activate a "clock" mechanism. When a certain period had expired, the parking meter would display a sign indicating the parking period had expired.

The abovementioned parking meters had a number of disadvantages including complexity of the working mechanisms, unreliability in respect of coins jamming and not being well adapted to provide a range of parking times and costs in respect thereof. A still further advantage is that were restricted to coin operation.

OBJECT OF THE INVENTION

It is the object of the present invention to overcome or substantially ameliorate at least one of the above disadvantages.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

There is disclosed herein a parking meter including:

- a coin sensor;
- a card reader;
- an electronic device electrically connected to the sensor and reader so as to receive information electronically therefrom, a display to provide information visually, a telephone connection to provide receiving information in respect of a card used in respect of said card reader, and connections for at least one rechargeable battery to power the reader, sensor and device; and
- a solar cell operatively associated with said connections to charge said battery;
- a body having;
- a front face having a coin slot into which coins are inserted for delivery to the sensor and then the coin storage facility;
- a card slot into which a card is inserted to be read by said reader, and a rear face providing a window via which said solar cell is exposed to light, and providing visual access to said display.

Preferably, said meter includes an indicator to provide an indication whether a parking period has expired.

Preferably, said indicator is adjacent or at said rear face.

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Preferably, said meter is adapted to be fixed to a post fixed to a ground surface, with said body including a set of panels to be fixed relative to said post, and a cover panel pivotally attached to the panel set for pivoting movement about a generally horizontal axis between a closed position and an open position.

Preferably, said meter includes controls at said front face via which a user can operate the parking meter.

Preferably, said coin sensor, said card reader, said device and said control panel are a module removable as an assembly from within said body.

Preferably, said module includes a body, and said coin sensor is a coin validator unit removably located in said body.

Preferably, said telephone is a mobile (cellular) telephone.

Preferably, said front face and rear face converge upwardly.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

A preferred form of the present invention will now be described by way of example with reference to the accompanying drawings wherein:

FIG. 1 is a schematic isometric view of a parking meter assembly;

FIG. 2 is a schematic front isometric view of a parking meter employed in the assembly of FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a schematic rear isometric view of the parking meter of FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a schematic front isometric view of the parking meter of FIG. 2 with a top panel pivoted to an open position; and

FIG. 5 is a schematic rear isometric view of a module of the parking meter of FIG. 2.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the accompanying drawings there is schematically depicted a parking meter assembly **10**. The assembly **10** includes a base **11** that would be fixed to or embedded in a ground surface, typically adjacent the kerb at which a car is to be parked. Attached to the base and extending upwardly therefrom is a post **12** to the upper end of which there is attached a parking meter **13**. The parking meter **13** includes a lower skirt **14** that is to be fixed to the post **12**, an intermediate panel set **15**, and a cover panel **16** pivotally mounted relative to the panel set **15**. The cover panel **16** and panel set **15** provide a front face **17** having front face portions **18** and **19**. The front face **17** includes a coin slot **25**, a card slot **20** and a control panel **21**. The control panel **21** includes a window **22**, and buttons **24** that are manipulated by a user to operate the parking meter **13**. The window **22** provides a user with means of viewing a screen **23** via which information is conveyed to the user. The information typically would include date, time and when the parking period is to expire and perhaps further information such as when the parking meter **13** is operable, information in respect of card use and cost.

The cover panel **16** is pivotally attached to the panel set **15** by means of a pivot **26** providing a generally horizontal pivot axis **45** that is generally normal to the post **12**. The cover panel **16** is pivotally movable through an acute angle from the closed position as shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, to the open position shown in FIG. 4. In an alternative form, the panel **16** may be slidably attached.

The rear of the parking meter **13** includes a rear face **27** as part of the cover panel **16**. The rear face **27** includes a window aperture **28** that receives a panel that provides for the transmission of light to a solar panel **29**. The front face portion **18**

and rear face 27 converge upwardly so that they are both inclined by acute angles to the horizontal.

At or adjacent the rear face 27 is an indicator 30 that can be viewed easily by a parking ranger moving past the meter 10, the indicator 30 providing an indication in respect of whether a parking period has expired.

When mounted adjacent a kerb separating a footpath from a roadway, the rear face 27 would face the adjacent roadway and the front face 17 away from the roadway so that a user would be standing on the footpath and facing their vehicle when operating the meter 13.

The panel set 15 and cover panel 16 provide a housing 31 within which a module 32 is located. The module 32 includes an electronic device 33 that incorporates the screen 23. The module 32 particularly includes a coin sensor 34 in the form of a coin validator 35. The coin validator 35 is received within a slot 37 of the body 36 of the module 32. Typically the coin validator 35 would provide a passage 37 through which coins would move to be "counted" and validated for the purposes of the coin validator 35 providing a signal in respect of whether appropriate coins have been delivered to the slot 25. Accordingly, the passage 37 would communicate with the slot 25 so as to receive coins therefrom. Once passing through the coin validator 35, the coins are delivered to a coin receptacle than can be cleared. The coin receptacle is located behind the skirt 14 which preferably has a door to provide for access to the coin receptacle. The coin validator 35 is provided as a unit and is removable from the module 32, when the module 32 is removed from within the housing 31.

The module 32 is also provided with a light (LED) 38 and/or colour disk 39 that are operated to provide an indication in respect of whether a parking period has expired. The light 38 and/or disk 39 are part of the indicator 30 and can be seen by the parking ranger. Typically the disk 39 would be pivotally mounted and would be "flipped" to be black or red, the red indicating that a parking period has expired.

Located immediately behind the slot 20 is a card reader 40 that would read the magnetic strip (or other information providing device) on a credit or debit card.

The coin validator 35 and card reader 40 are electrically linked to the control panel 21 to provide information therefore in respect of whether payment has been made.

Preferably, the device 33 would include a mobile (cellular) phone link so that information may be conveyed and received in respect of a credit or debit card read by the card reader 40. The device 33 may also include a power supply (battery), an IR port and LED status indicators.

Preferably, the slot 20 is located in a plane that is inclined to the horizontal by an acute angle so that the slot 20 slopes downwardly to an inclined surface 41 being part of the front face 17. The surface 41 is downwardly facing so as to protect the slot 20 from water penetration. The surface 41 is also provided with a recess 42 enabling a user's fingers to hold the card while "swiping" card through the slot 20.

A key operated lock 43 is located in a rear panel 44 of the panel set 15, the lock 43 being operable to release the cover panel 16 when appropriate key is used.

What is claimed is:

1. A single space parking meter comprising:

- a. a coin sensor;
- b. a card reader;
- c. an electronic device electrically connected to the coin sensor and card reader so as to receive information electronically therefrom, the electronic device having a screen to provide information visually, a communication connection to provide receiving information in respect of a card used in respect of said card reader, and

connections for at least one rechargeable battery to power the reader, sensor and device;

d. a solar cell operatively associated with said connections to charge said battery;

e. a housing in which the coin sensor, card reader, and electronic device are located, the housing comprising an intermediate panel set and a cover panel, wherein the cover panel is movably attached to the intermediate panel set, and a surface of the cover panel and a surface of the intermediate panel set comprise a face, the cover panel including a plurality of buttons that operate the parking meter upon manipulation by a user;

f. a coin slot in the face into which coins are inserted for delivery to the coin sensor and then to a coin receptacle;

g. a card slot in the face into which a card is inserted to be read by said card reader;

h. a window aperture in said cover panel via which said solar cell is exposed to light;

wherein the coin sensor and the card reader are electrically linked to provide information to the electronic device to provide information of whether payment has been made;

wherein the screen of the electronic device is visible through the cover panel when the cover panel is attached to the intermediate panel set.

2. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein said meter includes an indicator to provide an indication whether a parking period has expired.

3. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein said meter is adapted to be fixed to a post fixed to a ground surface, with said intermediate panel set including a set of panels to be fixed relative to said post, and the cover panel is pivotally attached to the intermediate panel set for pivoting movement about a generally horizontal axis between a closed position and an open position.

4. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein the coin sensor, the card reader, the electronic device and the screen are a module removable as an assembly from within said housing.

5. The parking meter of claim 4, wherein said module includes a body, and said coin sensor is a coin validator unit removably located in said body.

6. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein said communication connection is a mobile (cellular) telephone connection.

7. The parking meter of claim 1, wherein the card reader is configured to read credit cards or debit cards.

8. A single space parking meter comprising:

a housing comprising an intermediate panel set and a cover panel, the cover panel being movably attached to the intermediate panel set, wherein the housing includes a first window, a plurality of buttons that operate the parking meter upon manipulation by a user, the plurality of buttons on the cover panel, and a second window;

a module configured to be removably received by the housing, the module comprising:

- a. a coin sensor,
- b. a card reader, and
- c. an electronic device electrically connected to the coin sensor and the card reader so as to receive information electronically therefrom, the electronic device comprising:
 - i. a screen to provide information visually via the first window when the cover panel is attached to the intermediate panel set,
 - ii. a communication connection to provide receiving information in respect of the card reader,

iii. a rechargeable battery electrically coupled to provide power to the reader, the sensor, and the electronic device, and

iv. a solar cell operatively coupled with the rechargeable battery to charge the rechargeable battery, the solar cell being disposed to receive light via the second window;

a coin slot in the parking meter housing into which coins are inserted for delivery to the coin sensor and then to a coin receptacle; and

a card slot in the parking meter housing into which a card is inserted to be read by the card reader;

wherein the coin sensor and the card reader are electrically linked to provide information to the electronic device to provide information of whether payment has been made.

9. The parking meter of claim **8**, wherein said card slot slopes downwardly to be accessible via a surface of the intermediate panel, and the surface of the intermediate panel is downwardly facing.

10. The parking meter of claim **8**, wherein the coin sensor comprises a coin validator unit that is removably attached to the module and includes the coin receptacle such that the coin sensor communicates with the coin slot of the parking meter housing when attached to the module for receiving inserted coins.

11. The parking meter of claim **8**, wherein said communication connection is a mobile (cellular) telephone connection.

12. The parking meter of claim **8**, wherein the card reader is configured to read credit cards or debit cards.

* * * * *