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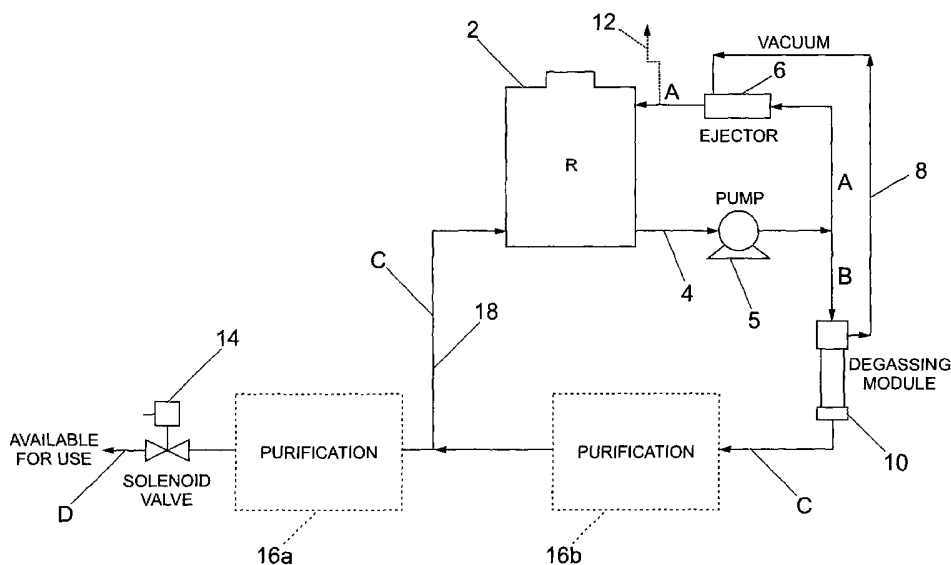
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(54) Title: IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO DEGASSING LIQUIDS



(57) Abstract: A method of degassing a liquid. Comprising the steps of: (a) drawing liquid from the reservoir/volume to form a degassing stream (4B); (b) using a vacuum to degas the degassing stream; and (c) wholly, substantially or partly returning the vacuum-forming stream A to the reservoir/volume. The effect of the present invention is to provide a system in dynamic equilibrium, in which a stream of liquid is degassed, made available for use and, if not required, re-mixed with a second stream. Thus, a volume of degassed liquid such as water is immediately available on demand; water savings are created compared with operating a separate water as a vacuum-forming (a) supply to power the ejector (6).

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— *before the expiration of the time limit for amending the claims and to be republished in the event of receipt of amendments*

*For two-letter codes and other abbreviations, refer to the "Guidance Notes on Codes and Abbreviations" appearing at the beginning of each regular issue of the PCT Gazette.*

1 IMPROVEMENTS RELATING TO DEGASSING LIQUIDS

2

3 The present invention relates to methods and  
4 apparatus for degassing liquids, particularly but  
5 not exclusively water.

6

7 For certain uses, it is necessary or desired to  
8 reduce the dissolved gas content of liquids where  
9 the presence of reactive gases such as oxygen or  
10 carbon dioxide might interfere with a chemical  
11 reaction or physical properties, or where the  
12 release of gas bubbles into a liquid stream might  
13 affect volumes and flows. For example, clinical  
14 analysers.

15

16 Dissolved gases can be removed by exposing large  
17 surface areas of the liquid to a vapour phase  
18 deficient in the gases to be removed. This is  
19 conveniently done by flowing the liquid past a  
20 suitable membrane with a vacuum applied to the other  
21 side. One method for doing this is shown in  
22 EP0535607A2, which describes a system for

1 degasifying water. A high pressure waste water  
2 stream is passed through an ejector to produce a  
3 vacuum, which vacuum is used to degasify a pure  
4 water stream. The waste water is discarded and the  
5 degasified water is provided as a constant stream.

6

7 It is an object of the present invention to improve  
8 the degassing system.

9

10 Thus, according to one aspect of the present  
11 invention, there is provided a method of degassing a  
12 volume of liquid comprising the steps of:

- 13 (a) drawing liquid from the volume to form a  
14 degassing stream;  
15 (b) using a vacuum to degas the degassing stream;  
16 and  
17 (c) wholly, substantially or partly returning the  
18 degassing stream to the volume.

19

20 Preferably, the vacuum to degas the degassing stream  
21 is generated by a vacuum-forming stream, which is  
22 also drawn from the volume.

23

24 The liquid can be drawn from the volume and/or  
25 circulated through the system using any suitable  
26 means, generally one or more pump means. The  
27 vacuum-forming stream and degassing stream could be  
28 separately drawn from the volume, or divided from  
29 one stream.

30

31 After degassing, the degassed stream could be made  
32 immediately available for use, possibly through one

1 or more valves. Alternatively, the degassed stream  
2 could undergo further treatment or purification, if  
3 required, by one or more means known in the art such  
4 as deionisation, UV irradiation or filtration.

5

6 The volume preferably is or at least includes a  
7 reservoir or other liquid holding means. The  
8 degassed stream is preferably wholly, substantially  
9 or partly returned to any such reservoir.

10

11 The method could include a path for some or all of  
12 the vacuum-forming stream to return to the volume as  
13 a recirculation loop.

14

15 The method could be operated continuously or  
16 intermittently.

17

18 The rate of flow of each stream, including any  
19 recirculation loops, depends upon the desired rate  
20 of takeoff of the degassed stream, and/or any rate  
21 of intermittent use, and the degree of degassing  
22 required.

23

24 The method preferably includes one or more locations  
25 or arrays able to hold a volume of degassed liquid  
26 ready for immediate use, e.g. 5 or 10 litres. Thus,  
27 a certain volume of liquid is available 'on demand'.  
28 Such locations or arrays include purification units  
29 or other tanks, etc, generally being closed to  
30 atmosphere or similar.

31

1 The pump(s) are preferably used to maintain a  
2 certain level of degassed liquid in a recirculating  
3 flow, and/or in a location immediately available for  
4 use. Liquid to make up for that removed may be  
5 added at any part of the volume or circuit, but is  
6 preferably added to any reservoir or pump.

7

8 The part of any vacuum-forming stream being  
9 returning to the volume will be super-saturated with  
10 the removed gases (from the degassing stream). Upon  
11 its return to the volume, time will provide the  
12 possibility of equilibration with the surrounding  
13 atmosphere to lose some or all of the excess gas.

14 Other gas-removal methods could also be used,  
15 including catalytic nucleation, membranes, thermal  
16 effects, or contact with inert gases. If there is a  
17 requirement for greater degassing, the returning  
18 vacuum-forming stream could be wholly or partly  
19 diverted, e.g. to a drain, to reduce the level of  
20 gas returning into the volume.

21

22 Preferably, the part of the degassed stream being  
23 recirculated to a reservoir enters the reservoir at  
24 or near the base of the reservoir, and/or near the  
25 degassing stream outflow. Thus, the degassing stream  
26 outflow should at least partly include some of the  
27 incoming degassed stream, thereby using an already  
28 partly degassed flow.

29

30 Similarly, the part of any vacuum-forming stream  
31 being recirculated to the volume preferably enters  
32 the volume at a point distal to the outflow of the

1 liquid drawn to form the degassing stream, such as  
2 at or near the top of the reservoir, so as to lessen  
3 the use of this stream, being super-saturated, in  
4 the degassing stream outflow.

5

6 The vacuum-forming stream may be directly or  
7 indirectly circulated to the volume. Indirect  
8 circulation may include one or more degassing or  
9 'de-supersaturation' treatment steps as previously  
10 discussed.

11

12 According to a second aspect of the present  
13 invention, there is provided apparatus for degassing  
14 a liquid comprising a means to hold a volume of  
15 liquid, means for drawing liquid from the volume,  
16 means to provide a degassing-stream from said drawn  
17 liquid, means for providing a vacuum, means for  
18 degassing the degassing stream using the vacuum,  
19 wherein the apparatus includes means able to wholly,  
20 substantially or partly return the degassed stream  
21 to the volume.

22

23 Preferably, the apparatus includes means for drawing  
24 liquid to provide a vacuum-forming stream, which  
25 vacuum-forming stream generates the vacuum to degas  
26 the degassing stream, and possibly includes means  
27 able to wholly, substantially or partly return the  
28 vacuum-forming stream to the volume means. The  
29 volume means may be a reservoir or similar liquid  
30 holding means, and the means for drawing liquid may  
31 be one or more pumps.

32

1 In particular, the apparatus of the present  
2 invention for degassing water comprises a reservoir  
3 to hold the water, a pump to draw the water from the  
4 reservoir, a first water circuit providing a  
5 degassing stream from the pump, a second water  
6 circuit providing a vacuum-generating stream from  
7 the pump, wherein the first circuit includes a  
8 degassing module for degassing the water, a degassed  
9 water take-off point, a water take off point and a  
10 return to the reservoir, and the second circuit  
11 includes an ejector to generate the vacuum for the  
12 degassing module.

13

14 The present invention is usable with any suitable  
15 liquid, including high and low-temperature liquids  
16 and solvents. One liquid is water.

17

18 An embodiment of the present invention will now be  
19 described by way of example only and with reference  
20 to the accompanying drawing and graphs in which;

21

22 Figure 1 shows a scheme for the system of the  
23 present invention; and

24

25 Figures 2 to 7 are graphs illustrating aspects of  
26 the invention.

27

28 Referring to the drawing, Figure 1 shows a reservoir  
29 2 holding a volume of water to be degassed. The  
30 water may already have undergone one or more  
31 purification operations.

32



1 The reservoir 2 has an out-flow 4 to a pump 5. The  
2 outflow from the pump 5 is then divided between a  
3 vacuum-forming stream A and a degassing stream B.  
4 The vacuum-forming stream A provides the motive  
5 power for an ejector 6. The ejector 6 is used to  
6 produce a vacuum, which vacuum is directed through a  
7 vacuum line 8, having at its other end, a degassing  
8 module 10.

9

10 The degassing stream B passes through the degassing  
11 module 10, and the vacuum on the degassing module 10  
12 reduces the dissolved gas content of the stream B to  
13 form a degassed stream C.

14

15 The operation of the pump 5, ejector 6 and degassing  
16 module 10 are known in the art.

17

18 The flow of the vacuum-forming stream A after the  
19 ejector 6 is returned to the reservoir 2. The  
20 return stream A is supersaturated with the removed  
21 gasses, and is preferably given the possibility of  
22 equilibrating with the surrounding atmosphere to  
23 lose some of the excess gas. If necessary, some or  
24 all of the returning vacuum-forming stream could be  
25 taken through line 12 to a separate location or to a  
26 drain to reduce the returning level of gassified  
27 water into the reservoir 2. This assists the  
28 provision of higher than 'normal' degassed-water if  
29 desired or necessary. Other degassing of the super-  
30 saturated stream is possible.

31

1     Meanwhile, the degassed steam C is available for use  
2     through a means such as a solenoid valve 14. Stream  
3     C may also undergo further treatment of purification  
4     (16), if desired or necessary.

5  
6     Stream C may also be wholly or partly recirculated  
7     back into the reservoir 2 via line 18. Stream C is  
8     preferably returned to the bottom of the reservoir 2  
9     to minimise re-resolution of gasses from the  
10    atmosphere. In practice, it has been found that  
11    with water as the fluid, the dissolved oxygen  
12    content of the re-circulated water from stream C is  
13    decreased.

14  
15    The split of water between streams A and B is  
16    designed such that the flow in stream A is  
17    sufficiently great to provide a high and sufficient  
18    level of degasification. If necessary, this flow  
19    can be reduced when water is being dispensed or  
20    otherwise taken off.

21  
22    Suitable-sized vessels could be included in the  
23    circuit to provide the required volume of degassed  
24    water. This can be conveniently and economically  
25    achieved by positioning some or all of any other  
26    purification technologies (16) between the degassing  
27    module and the take-off point (D).

28  
29    As degassed stream C is removed from the system, it  
30    may be replaced in the reservoir 2 by water with a  
31    higher level of dissolved gas. The present  
32    invention uses the release of excess gas from the

1 returning stream A, as described above, to maintain  
2 the overall gas content at levels consistent with  
3 producing an adequately degassed product stream C.  
4 If there is a higher liquid purity requirement,  
5 returning stream A could periodically be diverted to  
6 drain as described above.

7

8 The overall system could be operated on an  
9 intermittent basis such as for five minutes every 30  
10 minutes, to minimise energy consumption. The design  
11 will permit the maintenance of sufficient volumes of  
12 degassed water available for use with no additional  
13 delays over the time necessary to restart the pump.

14

15 In general, the overall effect of the present  
16 invention is to provide a system in dynamic  
17 equilibrium, in which a stream of liquid is  
18 degassed, made available for use, and, if not  
19 required, remixed with a second stream which  
20 contains some or all of the gasses which have been  
21 removed from the first stream. The general  
22 advantages of this arrangement are, firstly, a  
23 volume of degassed liquid such as water, is  
24 immediately available on demand. Secondly, a vacuum  
25 pump is not required, creating savings in energy,  
26 noise, cost and reliability. Thirdly, no external  
27 processes, such as a reverse osmosis step, need to  
28 be operating. Fourthly, water savings are created  
29 compared with operating a separate water supply to  
30 power the ejector.

31

1     Example 1

2

3     Using the arrangement shown in Figure 1, the  
4     following system was followed.

5

6     RESERVOIR R (2) 25 litre

7     EJECTOR (6) 1.0mm orifice

8     DEGASSING MODULE (10) Minntech LV-C-030-A

9     VOLUME (16B) 1.4 litre

10    VOLUME (16A) 0 litre

11    Dissolved oxygen content of feed is 9.0 ppm

12

13    There are two states of operation, recirculation and  
14    dispense. Flow rates are different in the two  
15    conditions.

16

17    In recirculation (valve 14 closed)

18

19    Flow A is 1.2 litre/min

20    Flow B is 0.5 litre/min

21    Flow C (line 18) is 0.5 litre/min

22    Vacuum (line 8) is -0.90 Bar gauge (0.1 Bar  
23    absolute)

24    Dissolved oxygen content of C is 1.1 to 2.0 ppm

25

26    In dispense (valve 14 open)

27

28    Flow A is 0.7 litre/min

29    Flow B is 1.0 litre/min

30    Flow C (line 18) is 0 litre/min

31    Vacuum (line 8) is -0.65 Bar gauge (0.1 Bar  
32    absolute)

1 Dissolved oxygen content of C is 2.0 to 5.0 ppm

2 Dispense flow (D) is 1.0 litre/min.

3

4 Figures 2 to 7 provide graphic information of test  
5 data using the arrangement in Figure 1. Figures 2,  
6 4 and 6 show one cycle of the system with water  
7 being dispensed at a regular interval. Figures 3, 5  
8 and 7 show several cycles for these conditions.

9

10 Figures 2 and 3 show the performance of a system as  
11 in example 1 where 1.5 litres of water were taken  
12 off every 7.5 minutes. Water was added to the  
13 reservoir R (2) to make up for that removed. The  
14 dissolved oxygen content of the water varied between  
15 a minimum of approximately 0.8 ppm and a maximum of  
16 1.6 ppm through the dispense cycle.

17

18 Figures 4 and 5 show the same system with the same  
19 dispense but with a longer time between dispenses of  
20 20 minutes. The extra time for recalculation and  
21 degassing prior to dispense resulted in the  
22 dissolved oxygen content being reduced to 0.35 ppm.  
23 Further recalculation could result in even lower  
24 dissolved oxygen values.

25

26 Figures 6 and 7 show data from the same system with  
27 a similar time between dispenses but with  
28 significantly larger dispense volumes. Initially  
29 the dissolved oxygen levels are low, but once the  
30 volume of the purification volume (16B) has been  
31 exceeded dissolved oxygen levels increase but remain  
32 at a level below that of the feed water.

1 Figures 2 to 7 confirm the benefits of the present  
2 invention, in that a volume of a liquid such as  
3 water can be provided 'on tap' with a reduced  
4 dissolved gas content, irrespective of any prior  
5 withdrawal or a static output situation. The  
6 present invention provides a simple and elegant  
7 arrangement able to always provide reduced dissolved  
8 gas content liquid in situations where demand can be  
9 variable.

1     Claims

2

3     1.    A method of degassing a volume of liquid  
4            comprising the steps of:

5       (a) drawing liquid from the volume to form a  
6            degassing stream;

7       (b) using a vacuum to degas the degassing stream;  
8            and

9       (c) wholly, substantially or partly returning the  
10           degassing stream to the volume.

11

12

13     2.    A method as claimed in Claim 1 further  
14            comprising the steps of drawing liquid from the  
15            volume to form a vacuum-forming stream, and  
16            using the vacuum-forming stream to generate the  
17            vacuum to degas the degassing stream.

18

19     3.    A method as claimed in Claim 2 which further  
20            comprises the step of returning at least some  
21            of the vacuum-forming stream to the volume  
22            after degassing.

23

24     4.    A method as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 3  
25            wherein the liquid is drawn from the volume  
26            using a pump.

27

28     5.    A method as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 4  
29            wherein the vacuum-forming stream and degassing  
30            stream are drawn separately from the volume.

31

- 1 6. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to 4  
2 wherein the vacuum-forming stream and degassing  
3 stream are drawn together from the volume and  
4 then divided into the two streams.  
5
- 6 7. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
7 Claims wherein after degassing, the degassed  
8 stream undergoes further treatment or  
9 purification.  
10
- 11 8. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
12 Claims wherein the volume includes a reservoir.  
13
- 14 9. A method as claimed in Claim 8 wherein the  
15 degassed stream is wholly, substantially or  
16 partly returned to the reservoir.  
17
- 18 10. A method as claimed in Claim 9 wherein the  
19 degassed stream being returned to the reservoir  
20 enters the reservoir at or near its base.  
21
- 22 ii. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
23 Claims wherein the degassed stream being  
24 returned to the volume enters the volume at or  
25 near the outflow of the liquid drawn to form  
26 the degassing stream.  
27
- 28 12. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
29 Claims wherein the liquid drawn from the volume  
30 for the degassing stream is at least partly  
31 some of the incoming degassed stream.  
32



- 1 13. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 3 to  
2 12 wherein the vacuum-forming stream being  
3 returned to the volume is wholly or partly  
4 degassed, de-supersaturated or both before  
5 being returned to the volume.  
6
- 7 14. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 3 to  
8 13 wherein the vacuum-forming stream being  
9 returned to the volume enters the volume at a  
10 point distal to the outflow of the liquid drawn  
11 to form the degassing stream.  
12
- 13 15. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
14 Claims wherein at least some of the degassed  
15 stream flows through or is held by a separate  
16 reservoir so as to be available on demand.  
17
- 18 16. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 2 to  
19 15 wherein at least some of the returning  
20 vacuum-forming stream is diverted to a drain.  
21
- 22 17. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
23 Claims wherein the method is continuous.  
24
- 25 18. A method as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to  
26 16 wherein the method is intermittent.  
27
- 28 19. A method as claimed in any one of the preceding  
29 Claims wherein the liquid to be degassed is  
30 water.  
31

- 1       20. Apparatus for degassing a liquid comprising a  
2           means to hold a volume of liquid, means for  
3           drawing liquid from the volume, means to  
4           provide a degassing-stream from said drawn  
5           liquid, means for providing a vacuum, means for  
6           degassing the degassing stream using the  
7           vacuum, wherein the apparatus includes means  
8           able to wholly, substantially or partly return  
9           the degassed stream to the volume.  
10
- 11       21. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 20 wherein the  
12           means for drawing liquid also provides a  
13           vacuum-forming stream, which vacuum-forming  
14           stream generates the vacuum to degas the  
15           degassing stream.  
16
- 17       22. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 21 which includes  
18           means able to wholly, substantially or partly  
19           return the vacuum-forming stream to the volume  
20           means.  
21
- 22       23. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 20 to  
23           22 wherein the volume means is a reservoir.  
24
- 25       24. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 20 to  
26           23 wherein the means for drawing liquid from  
27           the volume is one or more pumps.  
28
- 29       25. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 20 to  
30           24 further comprising one or more means for  
31           separately holding at least some of the  
32           degassed liquid.

1

2 26. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 25, wherein at  
3 least one said means is a purification means.

4

5 27. Apparatus as claimed in any of Claims 20 to 26,  
6 wherein the means for providing a vacuum is an  
7 ejector.

8

9 28. Apparatus as claimed in any one of Claims 20 to  
10 27 for degassing water comprising a reservoir  
11 to hold water, a pump to draw water from the  
12 reservoir, a first water circuit providing a  
13 degassing stream from the pump, a second water  
14 circuit providing a vacuum-generating stream  
15 from the pump, wherein the first circuit  
16 includes a degassing module for degassing the  
17 water, a degassed water take-off point, and a  
18 return to the reservoir, and the second circuit  
19 includes an ejector to generate the vacuum for  
20 the degassing module.

21

22 29. A method of degassing a liquid substantially as  
23 hereinbefore defined with reference to Figure  
24 1.

25

26 30. Apparatus for degassing a liquid substantially  
27 as hereinbefore defined with reference to  
28 Figure 1.

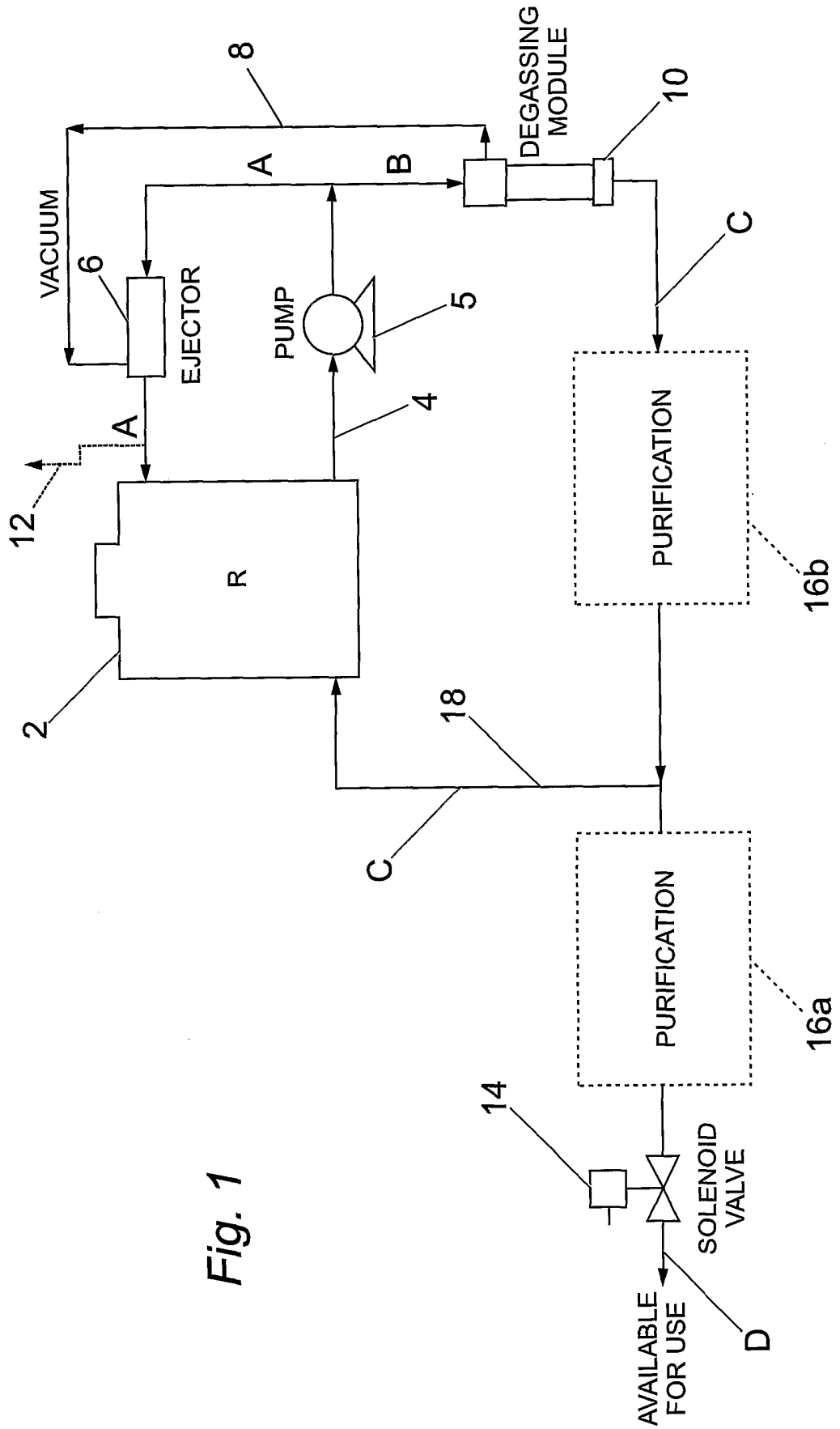


Fig. 1

One Cycle - Dissolved Oxygen in Product Water  
1.5 litre dispense every 7.5 minutes

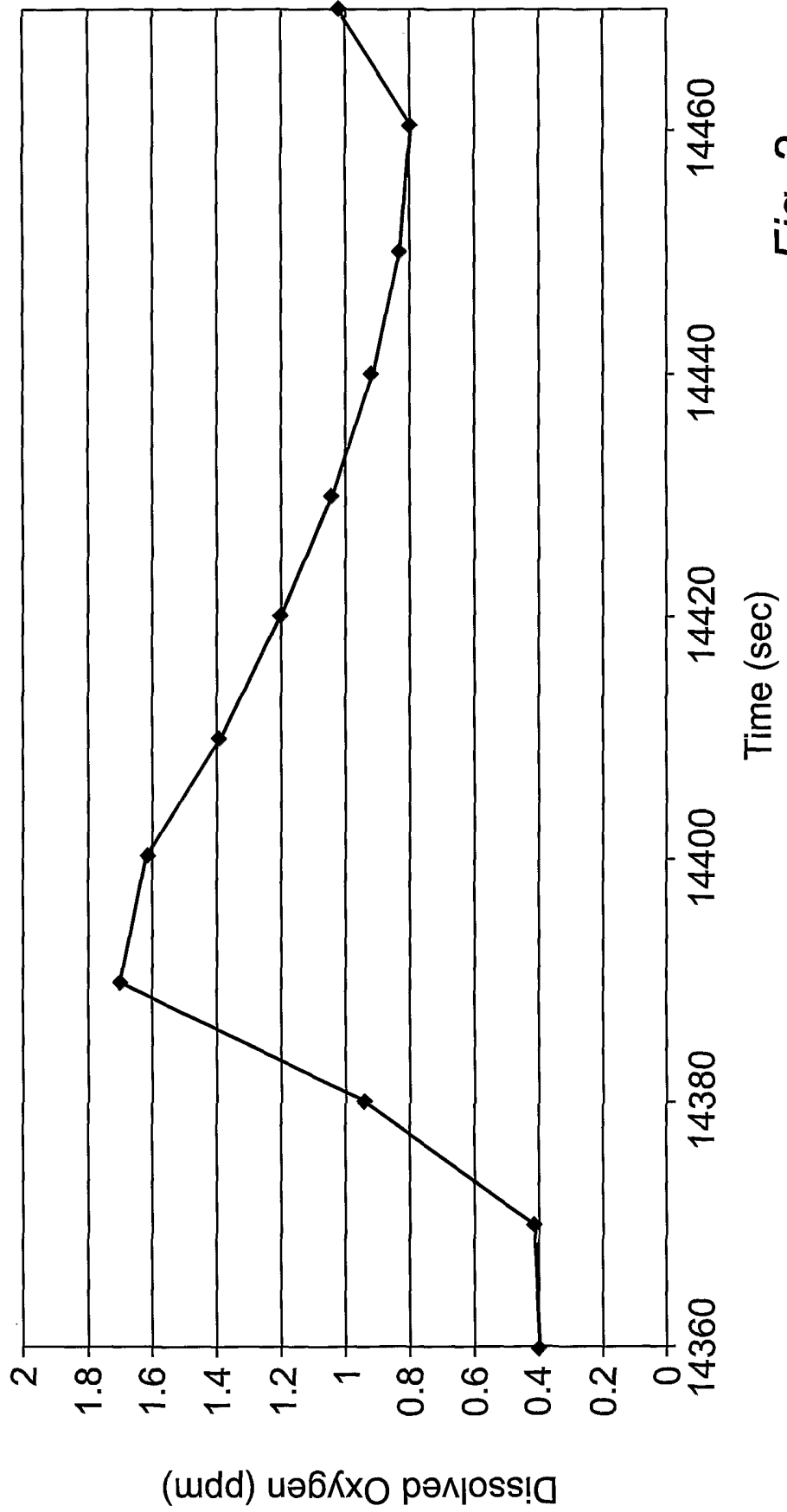


Fig. 2

Dissolved Oxygen in Product Water  
1.5 litre dispense every 7.5 minutes

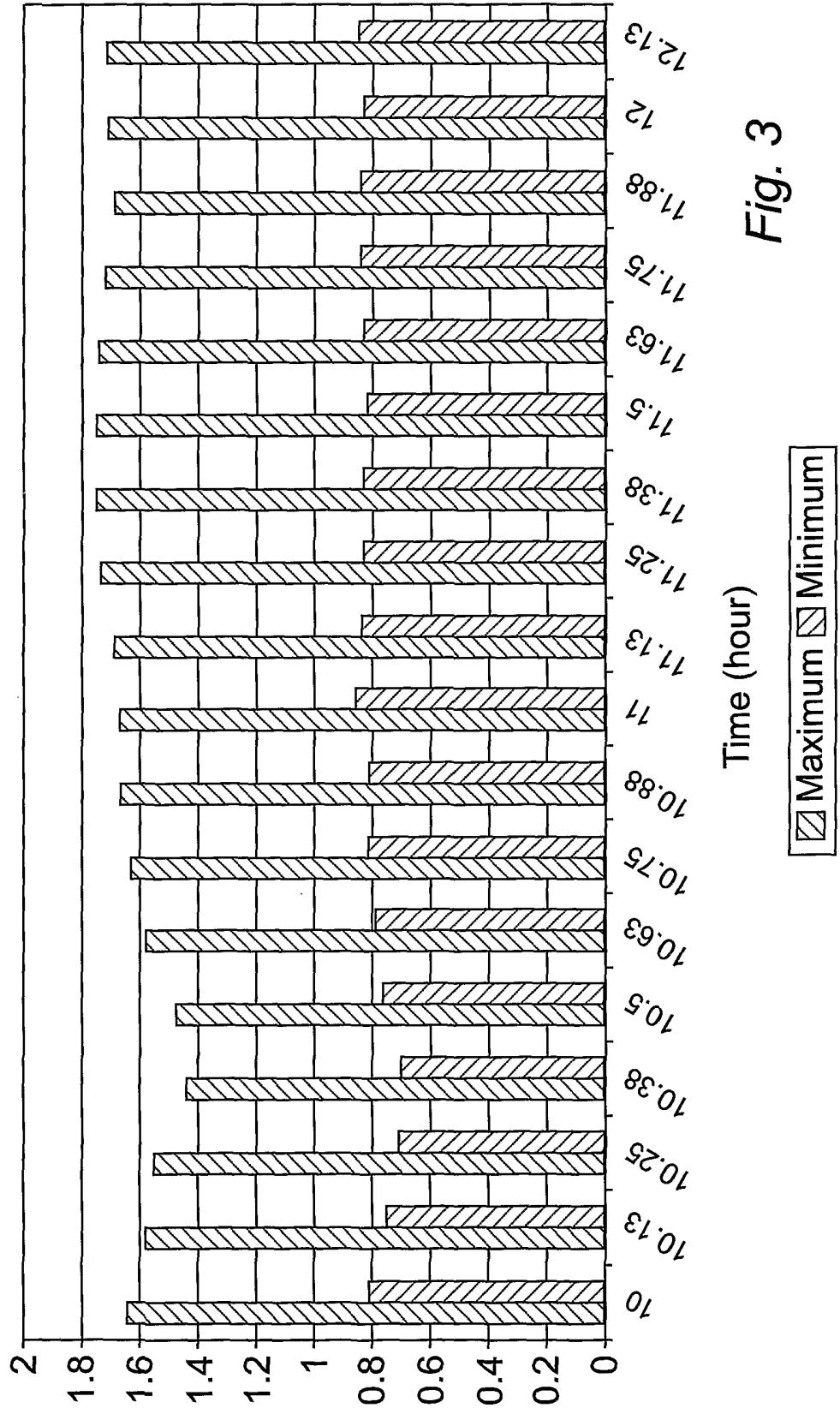


Fig. 3

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One Cycle Dissolved Oxygen in Product Water  
1.5 litre dispense every 20 minutes

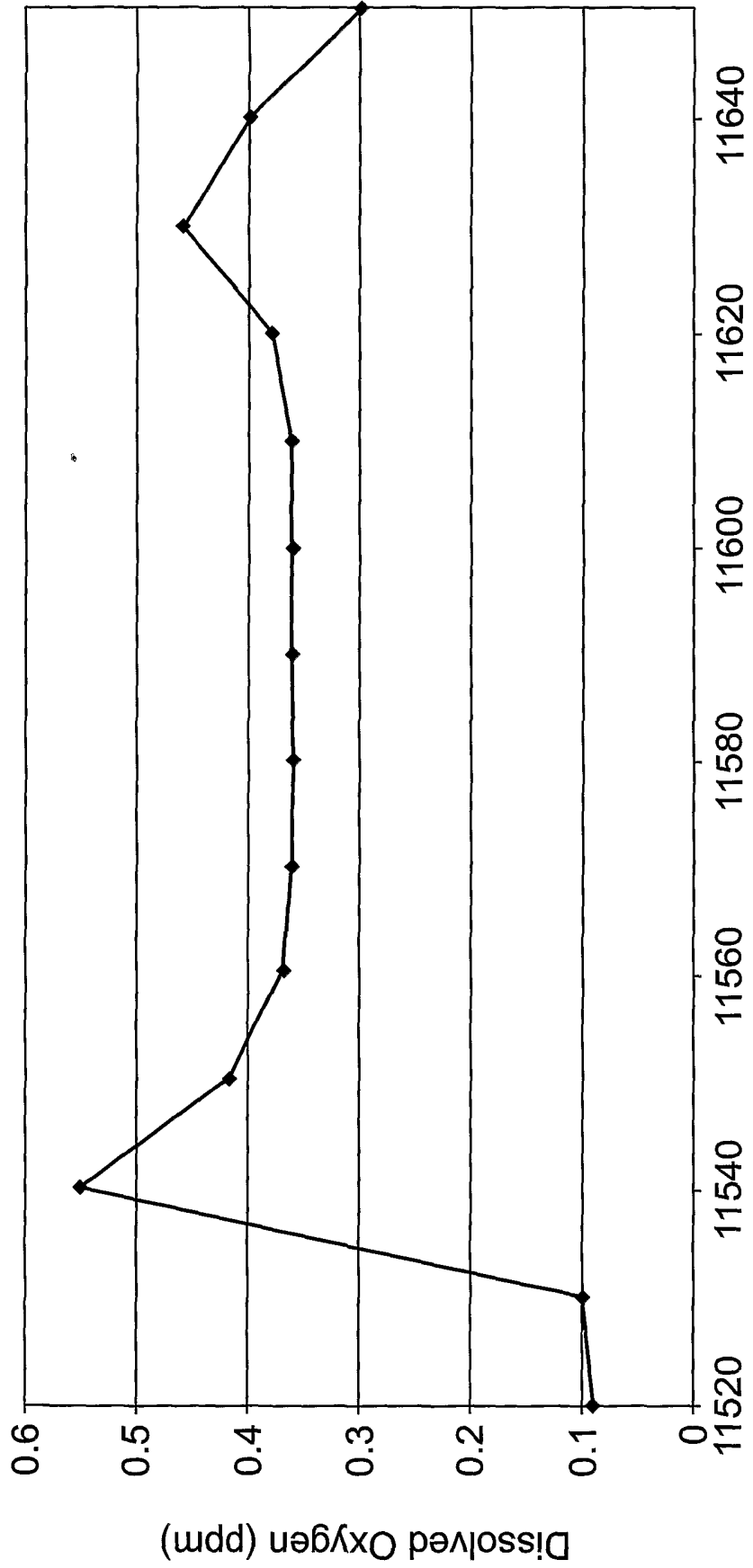


Fig. 4

Time (sec)

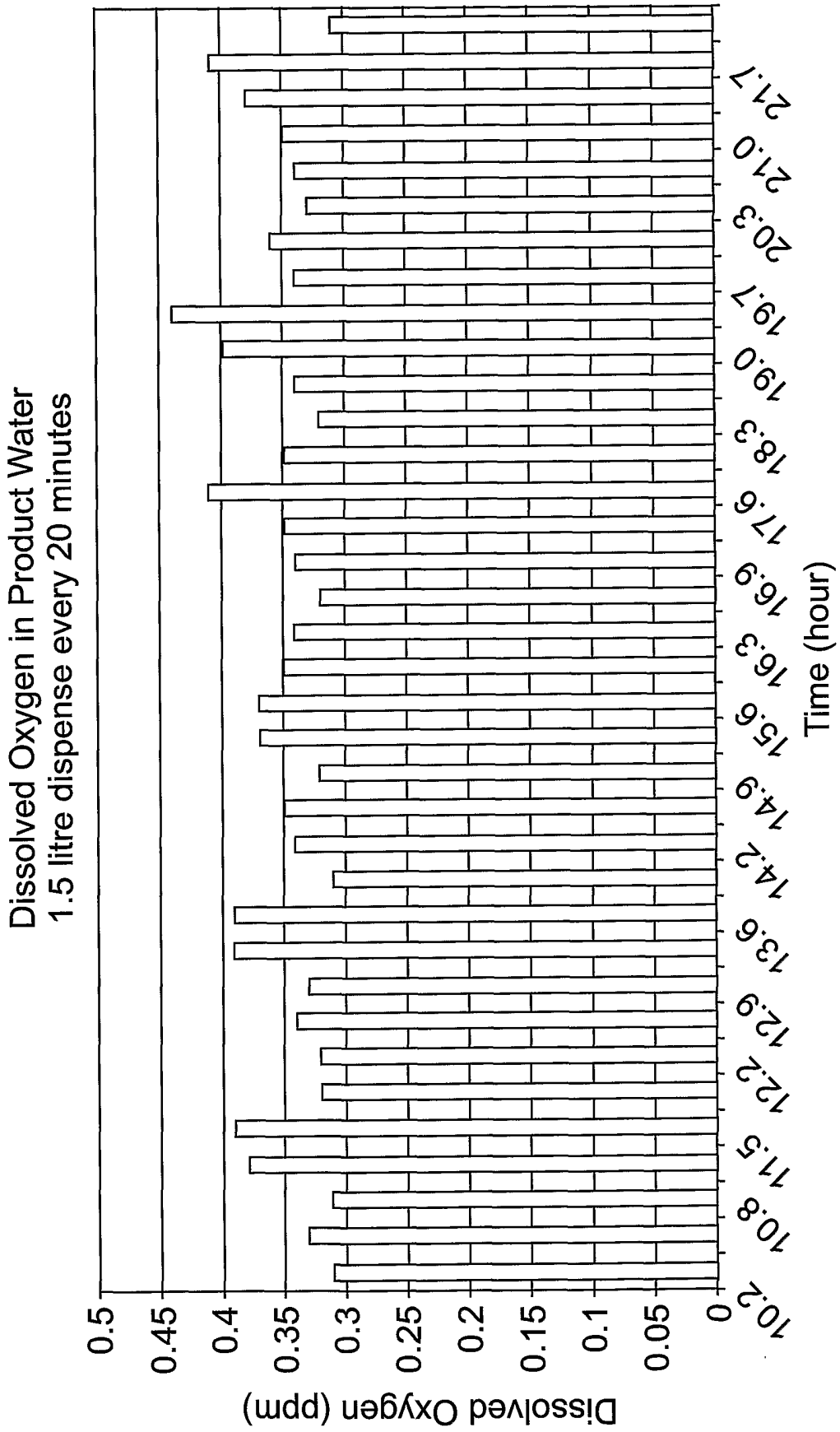


Fig. 5



One Cycle - Dissolved Oxygen in Product Water  
4.5 litre dispense every 24 minutes

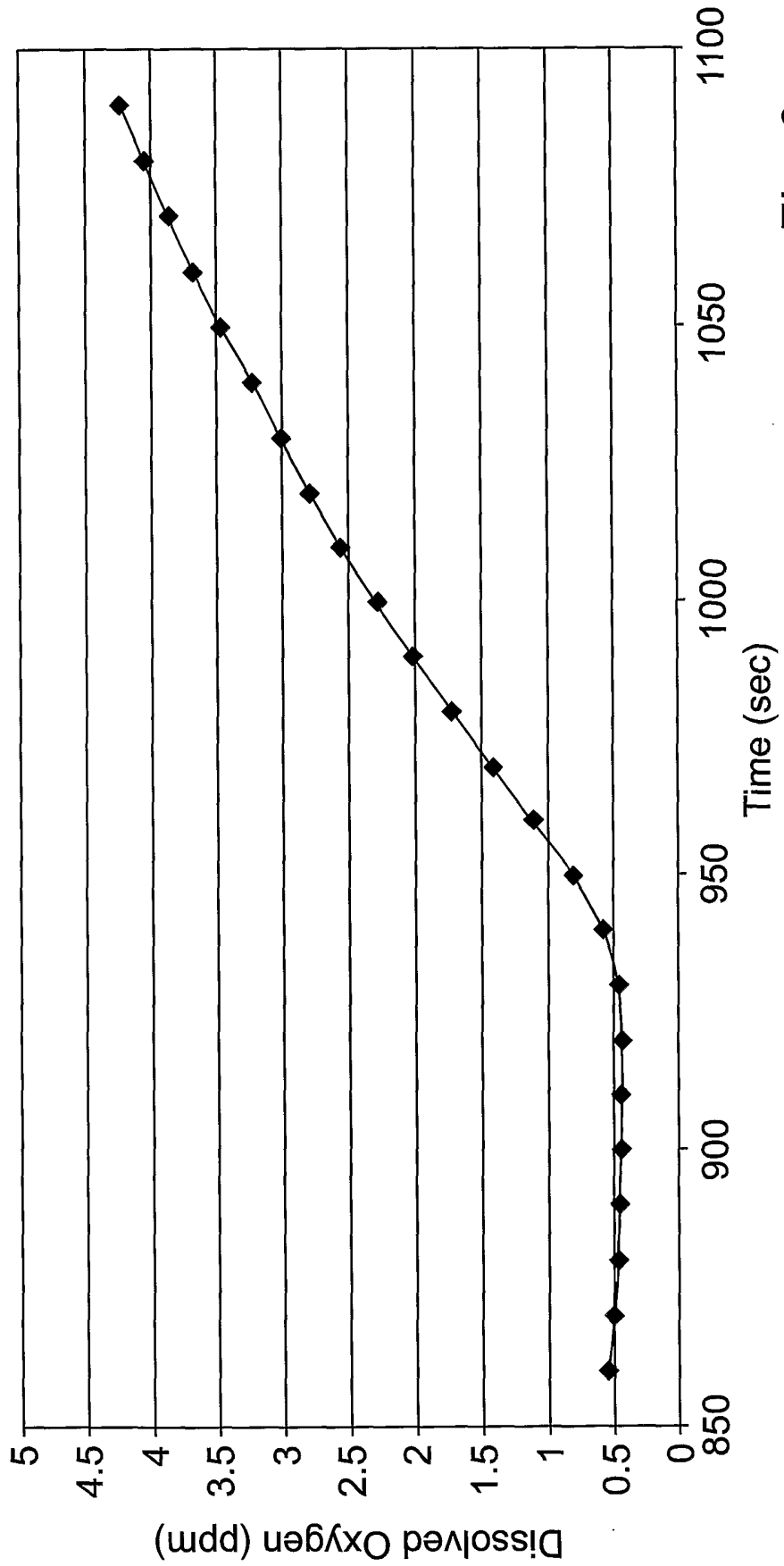


Fig. 6

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Dissolved Oxygen in Product Water  
4.5 litre dispense every 24 minutes

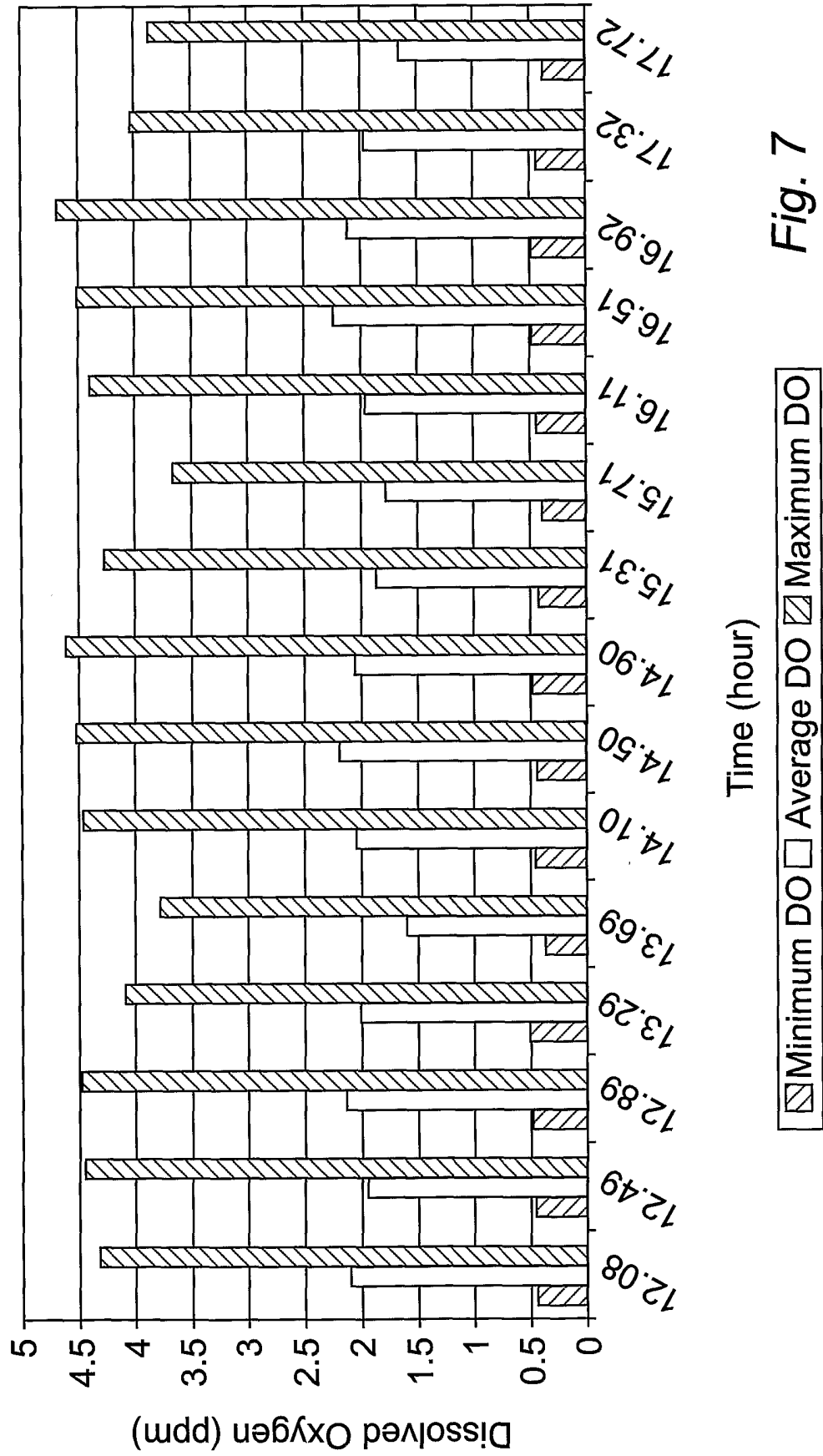


Fig. 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No  
PCT/GB 02/02447

<b>A. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER</b> IPC 7 B01D19/00 C02F1/20		
According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both national classification and IPC		
<b>B. FIELDS SEARCHED</b>		
Minimum documentation searched (classification system followed by classification symbols) IPC 7 B01D C02F		
Documentation searched other than minimum documentation to the extent that such documents are included in the fields searched		
Electronic data base consulted during the international search (name of data base and, where practical, search terms used) EPO-Internal		
<b>C. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT</b>		
Category *	Citation of document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to claim No.
X	FR 2 029 405 A (THIBONNET JEAN PIERRE) 23 October 1970 (1970-10-23)	1-4, 6, 8, 13-18, 20-30
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	column 2, line 47 - line 55 column 4, line 25 - line 43; figures 4, 8	
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<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Further documents are listed in the continuation of box C. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Patent family members are listed in annex.		
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Date of the actual completion of the international search 27 September 2002		Date of mailing of the international search report 07/10/2002
Name and mailing address of the ISA European Patent Office, P.B. 5818 Patentlaan 2 NL - 2280 HV Rijswijk Tel. (+31-70) 340-2040, Tx. 31 651 epo nl, Fax: (+31-70) 340-3016		Authorized officer Van Belleghem, W

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International Application No  
PCT/GB 02/02447

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