

Picture Gallery: Three coach watches

Photos and texts supplied by Artemis Yagou

From the late sixteenth century a style of watch developed that is now known as the coach watch, presumably because it was used as a travelling aid in coaches. Its size precluded its use as a wearable watch, but as a timekeeper designed to be carried on journeys it is probably best compared with the modern travelling alarm clock. Many examples were furnished with a calendar dial and an alarm, but some were less sophisticated and simply incorporated a striking mechanism to sound the hours in passing, as a clock does. Others were simpler still, having only a timekeeping element.¹

These oversized watches can be found in many collections, and they can be of great beauty and sophistication. However, it would seem that little is known with certainty about how they were actually used.

In the introduction to his book on coach watches,² Lukas Stollberg writes that he found no indication in primary sources that they were taken on board of coaches, let alone that they were standard equipment. Was the ring

intended to hang them in the coach, or in the inn during the night, with the repeat function to tell the time at night? He inspected many coaches of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but found no hooks or bags or corners for the purpose of carrying watches. And surely the watches would be at risk in ill-sprung coaches on bad roads? According to Stollberg, the most likely method of transporting them was in a purpose-made box, in which they could be held vertically on the seat next to the traveller.

In this Picture Gallery we illustrate three objects from the Timekeeping collection of the Deutsches Museum in Munich, that, because of their size, may be classified as coach watches. They were on display until mid-2022, but are now in storage. The photos were either taken or made available by Dr Artemis Yagou, who is attached to the Research Institute of the Deutsches Museum. The accompanying texts are a much reduced version of the far more extensive information she had supplied. Unless indicated otherwise, the object data are drawn from documentation held in the Deutsches Museum.



The three coach watches presented in the following pages, compared with a pocket watch of 1803 (foreground, left). They are signed Michael Zeidlmaier (background, right), Simeon van Leeuwen (foreground, right) and Julien Le Roy (background, left). (Photo by A. Yagou).



Watch by Michael Zeidlmaier

Inv. Nr. 2283 (T1). Described in the museum documentation as *Karosenuhr* (carriage watch), *Reiseuhr* (travel watch), *Satteluhr* (saddle watch) and *Taschenuhr* (pocket



watch). First half eighteenth century.³ Height 54 mm, diameter 97 mm, weight 940 grams (incl the 205 grams of the steel bell).⁴ The watch has an elaborate, pierced and engraved, inner silver case with rococo decoration, and an external, robust case, possibly made of brass painted to imitate tortoiseshell. The calligraphic initials 'MP' can be discerned near the base of the pendant.

The signature 'Michael Zeidlmaier' is engraved on the dial, under the moon sector, while 'I Michael Zeidlmaier Minchen' (sic) is engraved on the top plate of the movement.



Above: frontal view (Deutsches Museum, Archive, CD_29190, photo by Hubert Czech), and movement and internal case (Deutsches Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, photo by Christian Tylla). Below: the watch, partially dismantled, in its external case (Deutsches Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, photo by Christian Tylla).



Above: view of the Zeidlmaier watch movement. Below: the decorated rim, the pillars and the engraved barrels are visible in this side view. (Both photos Deutsches Museum, photographer unknown.)



Watch by Simeon van Leeuwen

Inv. Nr. 2282. Described in the museum documentation as *Kutschenuhr* (coach watch), *Reiseuhr* (travel watch) and *Taschenuhr* (pocket watch). First half eighteenth century.⁵

Height 38 mm, diameter 65 mm, weight 305 grams. The elaborately pierced and engraved



silver case bears decoration with floral and animal patterns, a face and buildings. The protective glass is missing.

The watch was donated to the Deutsches Museum in 1905 by Arthur Junghans (1852–1920), a leading clock and watch manufacturer. To house his substantial collection of clocks and watches, he established a museum in Schramberg (Baden-Württemberg, Germany). When he dismantled the museum, he donated or sold his collection to various other museums and collections.⁶

The watch is attributed to the Dutch maker Simeon van Leeuwen, for whose first name several alternative spellings have been recorded.



Above: frontal view (Deutsches Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, photo by Hubert Czech) and signature on the top plate (Photo by A. Yagou). Below: watch movement and case (Photo by A. Yagou).



The pierced and engraved silver case of the van Leeuwen watch. Near the pendant ring some buildings and a swan in the water can be distinguished. (Photos by A. Yagou.)

Watch by Julien Le Roy

Inv. Nr. 56076. Described in the museum documentation as *Kutschenuhr* (coach watch) and *Satteluhr* (saddle watch). Eighteenth century.⁷ Height 65 mm, diameter 178 mm, weight 1153 grams. It is enclosed in an internal, pierced silver case and an external leather case (seen in the group photo, not original) with holes presumably to make the alarm sounds more audible.

There are some unintelligible signs on the movement, possibly repair marks or scratches resulting from usage. The number 10370, arguably a serial number, is engraved on the inner side of the glass rim; the original glass does not survive.

The movement is signed by Julien Le Roy (1686–1769), one of the most celebrated makers of his time. The name of an Augsburg engraver is also visible under the silver regulation disk: ‘Joh. Paul Ren Silberstecher Augspurg’ (sic).



Above: frontal view (Deutsches Museum, Archive, CD_29166, photo by Hubert Czech); below the watch opened (Deutsches Museum, CC BY-SA 4.0, photo by Christian Tylla).





The top plate of the watch is signed 'Julⁿ Le Roy à Paris' (Deutsches Museum, photographer unknown.)

Below: the alarm switch: *Schlagt* / *Schlagt Nicht* – Strikes / Does not strike (Photo by A. Yagou).



Notes

1. This paragraph is quoted from the description of a silver-cased coach watch with an alarm and quarter repeat, dated c. 1745, made in Friedberg in Germany, and signed 'Legeips London' [= 'Spiegel' written backwards], British Museum inv. nr. 1888-1201-256, in David Thompson, *Watches* (London, 2008), pp. 72–73.
2. Lukas Stollberg, *Die Kutschenuhr: Satteluhrer, Karosenuhren, Alkovenuhren* (Munich: Callwey, 1993) describes more than 800 examples, half of which are illustrated in b/w photos.
3. The museum documentation dates it c. 1720; Stollberg, *Kutschenuhren*, p. 122, dates it c. 1745.
4. Otto Habinger, Karl Brendel and Hartmut Petzold, 'Die Uhrensammlung im Deutschen Museum Teil 1', *Uhren: Journal für Sammler klassischer Zeitmesser*, 16 (2), April/May 1993, 10–25, pp. 20–21.
5. The museum documentation dates it c. 1750, but it may well be earlier, as Baillie and Loomes record Simeon (Simon, Sijmon, Symon, and Sijmen) van Leeuwen as active in Amsterdam in the beginning of the eighteenth century, with a workshop in the Leidsestraat.
6. On Junghans and his collection, see Artemis Yagou, 'A multifaceted puzzle: An early modern portable clock with Islamic calendar', *Bulletin of the Scientific Instrument Society*, No. 155 (2022), 24–27.
7. The museum documentation dates it first half of the eighteenth century; Stollberg, *Kutschenuhren*, p. 171, dates it 1780, but this appears to be a mistake, as he gives dates 1724–1803, which are not those of the watchmaker but those of the architect, and historian of European architecture Julien-David Le Roy.