



ROLEX REF. 3525
SERIAL NUMBER 142'617
STAYBRITE
MOVEMENT CAL. 13" VZ
YEAR 1940



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January 19, 2026

ARCHIVE REGISTRATION *No. 73*

The watch accepted into the Archive is photographed in each of its individual parts, thus establishing its reference identity within the Archive. Acceptance into the Archive does not, however, certify that the watch was originally produced in this configuration.

PUCCI'S OPINION

This example combines its rare historical interest with a remarkable state of preservation. These features led us to register it in our Archive.



ARCHIVIO PUCCI PAPALEO

Recording *Excellent* Timepieces.



'THE PROUDS BARILETTO'

Rolex, Ref. 3525, Serial 142'617



Dossier

Amongst all of the first Rolex chronographs to sport a screw-down case, the 3525 was the one that has met with the greatest commercial success. Made between 1939 and 1945, it displayed clear signs of its full chronograph maturity: the 2 pushers and the waterproof Oyster case. About 1000 examples were produced in Staybrite steel. However, what ties its name to history is a story of prisoners of war. During the conflict years, Rolex, headquartered in a neutral country, engaged with Allied British and American Officers held captive, offering the famous "POW" watches: whoever asked for one received it with a covering letter and the chance to settle the bill once the war was over, or to return it – a tool to measure time and lighten the mood.

When the dials of Rolex timepieces are graced with the retailer's name it is no marginal detail: aside from highlighting its rarity, it furthermore enriches the dial with its own signature. And interestingly, this example exhibits the name of an unusual retailer, "Prouds" of Sydney, a historical Australian jeweller. Amongst the early Rolex chronographs, the 3525 reference stands out for the variety of its dials, with many differing colour and scale versions. This example, combines a richness of graphic dial patterns with a long trade route made in the 1940s, from the Geneva atelier to the Sydney jeweller.



The case body – caseband, lugs and bezel – is realised from one single piece of steel, closed only by the screw down case back. Known amongst collectors as the “Bariletto”, due to the barrel-shaped flanks of the case, it exhibits an understated and compact design. The case measures 35 mm and it is waterproof. In the foreground, the right flank highlights the “Patent Oyster” screw-down crown, for winding and time-setting, and the two chronograph pushers.



Waterproofness is the raison d'être of this watch case. Even the side view of the case, both from 6 and 12 o'clock, reveals its single-block nature: solid and continuous flanks, just stopped by the screw-down case back securing the middle case. Water tightness originated here, from the screwed case back, and the screw-down crown and pushers, which were conceived to provide resistance to water infiltrations. The bezel is fixed, realised from the same block as the case and does not come apart; the watertightness is due also to this technical feature, the Oyster principle, applied here to a mature chronograph.



The 3525 – together with the small forerunner reference 3481 – marks the passage from the snap cases, which are not sealed, to waterproof case chronographs. The 3525 has two pushers to activate the chronograph. It is the two-command waterproof system that differentiates the mature chronograph from the previously made chrono-stop watches sporting a single pusher at two o'clock, on references 3346 and 3462. The screw-down crown and case back make the 3525 a wrist chronograph built to withstand water and meant for a comfortable daily use.



The movement is a Valjoux, the ébauche adopted by the Geneva-based manufacturer for its hand-wound chronographs, chosen for its precision, reliability and finished to its customary standards. In this example, it is the VZ, a 13-ligne, 17-jewel calibre, representing at the time the most mature evolution of this family of movements. It is worth noting that, over the six-year production span of the reference 3525, the movement itself also evolved, with later examples being fitted with the more modern Calibre 23.





The screw-down case back bears on the inside the typical Oyster engraving: “Oyster Watch Co – Geneva Swiss”, followed by the list of patents filed in Great Britain, in Switzerland and in the United States, and by the German mark “D.R.P.”, a measure of how much Rolex cared to protect its waterproof system. Above the engraved scripts, the stamped shield displaying the “SAR” mark. On the outside, the case back carries the engraved reference and serial number 142617, which places this piece in the first reference series, because on later examples the serial will be engraved between the lugs, at six o’clock.





Dossier 3525/142617.
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