

## DOXA | The Aubry Period – From a Former Distributor

Whenever I finished the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Edition of the Doxa book, I still had a few pieces of information that I could have added but in order to get it ready for Basel 2007, I had to meet a deadline and it wasn't possible to include them. Since the book has been released there has been a lot more information surface, one piece in particular is very interesting. I have transcribed it here. The information comes from John Génart, who imported and sold Doxa watches in Denmark in the 1980s. John not only provided me with some tremendous old photographs and artwork that he commissioned but he has allowed me to tell his story.

The translation of the text in the advert reads:

"DOXA - the Rolls-Royce among special watches

Since 1907 (this is a typing error – it should actually have stated 1917) Aubry has been standing for the best of genuine Swiss quality craftsmanship.

Only the strongest materials are accepted for the fabrication of the special DOXA watches and each and every DOXA is tested prior delivery at extreme temperatures and

exposed during a ten days period to the water pressure corresponding to a sea depth of 750 meters.

DOXA is a unique, elegant, and unbreakable timepiece for those who prefer a quality and service that corresponds to Rolls-Royce.

DOXA - Direct import, sales, and services - phone #

Call for an offer and ask to speak with Mr. John Génart"

Close scrutiny will show that the sweep hand has a rectangular box at the end and a flared tail, however, the really interesting thing about this photograph is that it shows all three watches having left sided crowns. As John explains:

Regarding the crown placement at the 9 O'clock position. This was one of my recommendations to the Aubry engineers about the SUB 750T. Most of the 750T SUBs I imported to Denmark were ordered with the crown placed at 9 o'clock. This was for four reasons. For many years I had a problem with the crown sitting on the traditional right hand side at 3 o'clock on my old

DOXA – specialurenes Rolls-Royce.

DOXA submarine 750 test meter.



Siden 1907 har Aubry stået for ægte Schweizisk kvalitets håndværk – når det skal være bedst.

Kun de stærkeste materialer accepteres ved fabrikationen af DOXA specialurene, og hvert eneste DOXA afprøves inden levering ved ekstreme temperaturer og udsættes i 10 dage for det vandtryk, der er på 750 meters hav-dybde.

DOXA er et enestående, elegant og uopslideligt værk til dem, som ønsker en kvalitet og service, der svarer til Rolls-Royce.

**DOXA**  
by Aubry of Switzerland

DOXA – direkte import, salg og service.  
01 63 96 52

Ring efter tilbud og spørg efter John Génart.



SUB 300T. Since I was only a teenager when I got this watch it seemed additional big and heavy and it easily slid down wrist where the crown started to hurt an area on my hand. I actually at some point of time had to wear a patch on my hand to avoid further irritation. When I grew to an adult the problem mostly resolved itself by the fact that my wrists became thicker. However, there was still some movement. By placing the crown on the other side of the watch any aggravation would be totally eliminated. A second benefit was that the crown became much more protected from accidental impacts. The third benefit was that this feature made the watch even more unique and exciting. Finally, the "unbroken" and smooth side of the watch housing now became more exposed to admiring viewers and thereby gave off an even greater impression of solidity and homogeneity.

It was not a hard thing for the engineers at Aubry to design in this feature. Due to the watch component modularity, simplicity and symmetry in design of the SUB 750T things could be easily changed without the need for fabricating unique parts. It was only a question of assembling existing parts in another way and you could thereby create a great variety of versions to satisfy customer and personal preferences in a very inexpensive way.

Regarding the DOXA production at Aubry, John explains: By visiting the company I discovered why and how it was possible for the factory to deliver such a great variety of DOXA versions. One may think that this would be very expensive, complicated, and requiring heavy production apparatus. On the contrary, I got the impression that the DOXA production apparatus was small, inexpensive, effective, and simple. The factory consisted of a relatively large building of several floors housing most of the watch brands that Aubry produced in those days. On separate floors there were assembly lines for each brand including; CINY - WEST END - DOGMA - ERNEST BOREL and AUREOLE but not for DOXA. The DOXA watches were produced in the basement in a department that I would prefer to call "a sort of research and development department". There were no assembly lines here but a lot of special machinery and test facilities.

To me, this was the playground for the company engineers to create new ideas and make experiments. In the other departments, workers were sitting all day long at the assembly lines and here the engineers main responsibility was to check the quality of the output of the assemblers. In the basement there were no workers - only engineers - and it was here that the engineers themselves hand assembled and tested the DOXA watches. I saw no mass production of DOXA watches as such and only a few completed DOXA watches were kept for presentation to customers in the nice conference room on the second floor. In this way it was possible for the engineers to assemble a new DOXA watch relatively quickly and totally in accordance with customer preference.

All parts for assembling a DOXA were ready and available for a great variety of versions and most of these parts were actually produced by a number of SUB vendors - in some occasions even outside Switzerland - such as in Western Germany. It was the Aubry engineers responsibility to design the parts, specify tolerances and check the quality on return. The part of the assembly process for the DOXA SUBs that the engineers seemed most proud of was the testing of the watches which they themselves did in the basement.

Image 2 is from the mid 1980s and shows the village of Saignelégier in the Swiss mountains where Aubry had their factory building. If you study the photo you will see the DOXA building which is the largest building with the flat roof over on the right hand side of the main road, close to the centre of the village. Most of the village families were related to the watch business and to the left hand side of the village a relatively new housing area can be seen.

John also commented on the vintage SUB 600T: This watch had the new generation housing which also was used for the SUB 1000T. When this new generation of watches came out I only imported a few SUB 600T and SUB 1000T models initially in order to investigate the difference between these models myself prior ordering a greater number. The SUB 600T was less expensive than the SUB 1000T but seemed to be no different. Other than a greater depth rating on the dial the only real engineering change that I could see was that the SUB 1000T had a solid sapphire glass.

I talked with one of the engineers at the factory about it and he said that the real difference - beside the glass - was to be found in the testing procedures. More quality testing was put into the SUB 1000T and each of these were tested at 100 bars where the SUB 600T was only tested at 60 bars. On the other hand he told me that he personally - for the fun of it - at some point of time had tested the SUB 750T, the SUB 600T, and the SUB 1000T at the maximum pressure that the test tank at the factory could handle. That was 250 bars corresponding to 2,500 meters of water depth and he had found no problems with any of the watches during or after the test. But, as he also said, this was not standard procedure. The watches were normally only tested to the depth for which they were rated and therefore the factory would only guarantee the quality up to that point. So, if a customer needed to be certain that the watch would withstand at least 100 bars of pressure no matter what, he or she would go for the SUB 1000T only.

When I started to market the three models together I quickly discovered that customers were more likely to go for either the SUB 750T (which had the old famous Tonneau design) or the SUB 1000T (new generation design) despite the fact that the SUB 600T was less expensive. Due to this, and in order to avoid any confu-



Image 2 | Aubry Factory in Saingnégier

sion, I decided not to import and market any additional SUB 600T models. The last one I had left I started to use myself for a special purpose.

In 1991 I applied to become a member of a special military unit in Denmark and was accepted for entering the training program. The name of the organization was SEP/ELK which basically translates to Special Intelligence Patrols. Image 3 shows a copy of a pamphlet from that time. SEP/ELK has recently changed its name to: Patruljekompagni / ELK. Members consisted of voluntary personnel that would go through several years of hard training alongside their usual job with the purpose of being able to operate undetected behind enemy lines in case of foreign troop occupation of Denmark. We are talking about a very hard and tough military training program which in some cases was executed in cooperation with other national and foreign special forces.

During all the training and exercises that I participated in, I used the SUB 600T in question and it functioned with no problems at all. However, the organization only accepted the use of black watches with no shiny metal.

At this point of time the DOXA watches were not available in a military prepared version from factory as they are today, so I had to paint the housing of my SUB 600T with a mat black paint in order to prepare it for military use and replace the original metal bracelet with a DOXA rubber strap. This watch turned out to be perfect for me to use on the military training missions. No other members had a watch that could be so clearly read in pitch dark conditions and we were even able to get sufficient light from the hour markers on the dial to read our map in the woods in the middle of the night.

However, due to my job within the offshore business - that required more and more of my time abroad - I was not able to continue the training and had to leave the program after participating less than one year. But I'm quite impressed that the watch did not get badly scratched or damaged taking into consideration what physical conditions the watch was forced to go through on these military training missions. Only a tiny scratch in the glass and some tiny scratches to the bezel from that time can be seen today. The watch made it through all right but the quartz mechanism stopped working a few months later for some unknown reason. I initially thought





**Specielle  
Efterretningspatruljer  
ved  
Østre Landsdelkommando  
(SEP/ELK)**



Image 3 | SEP/ELK Brochure



I understand from your book that the Aubrey's "next generation" watches SUB 600T and SUB 1000T are very rare and you may not even have had the chance to hold such a watch in your hand yourself. Therefore I would like you to have my SUB 600T. It's the last one from that generation of watches that I have left in my possession. I also understand that you have good contact with the DOXA factory so maybe they can help you replacing the clockwork if damaged beyond repair. As you can see on my picture of the packet content there is also a spare bezel to the watch if you should prefer to exchange the black bezel for the grayish bezel. As you probably know you can replace the bezel relatively easy by yourselves by turning the start marker on the bezel to the 6 o'clock position and start wrinkling the bezel it will

I was deeply honored by Johns offer and shortly afterward I received the watch and components shown in Image 4. Doxa have said they will search for a movement for me to restore the watch to its former glory.

Johns story and insight into how DOXA operated is another example of how the DOXA SUB didnt need to be advertised by famous celebrities, it was a watch that was worn by real people in real situations. If you wanted to pose at the restaurant you wore something else. If you wanted to help protect your country you wore a DOXA.

