

# TORNOS – SOMETHING TO WRITE HOME ABOUT

**Norfolk-based Mussett Engineering is using two DECO 20a automatic sliding head CNC lathes from Tornos to manufacture parts round-the-clock for a leading producer of writing implements.**



DECO 20a, a flexible solution for scribing tools. Who knows how many contracts have been signed around the world thanks to parts produced on this turning machine at Mussett engineering?

Mussett Engineering, located 10 miles southeast of Norwich, claims to be the largest sub-contract engineering facility in the East of England: boasting a workforce of over 100 and an array of some 50 CNC machine tools at its 33,000 sq ft facility, the ISO9001:2000 accredited company is probably right. Although in recent years the company has tended to specialise in the manufacture of complex parts in batches of 10-100 for the aerospace, automotive, oil, petrochemical and compressor sectors, some contracts still call for batches of up to 20,000 components. For this reason Mussett Engineering can keep its two 10-axis DECO 20a sliding head autos busy 24 hours a day.

"We originally acquired the machines to tackle a very small diameter part for the telecommunications industry," says managing director and founder, Gordon Mussett. "However, they are so versatile that we have since used the machines to produce parts for a number of different sectors, including medical and armaments. At present they are both running non-stop producing internal and external components for writing implements."

Mr Mussett says that the Tornos machines have helped cut cycle times dramatically in comparison to the company's conventional twin turret, twin head machines.

"I recall one part, a regulator for a pressure gauge valve, which previously took 6 minutes 35 seconds on a twin turret, twin head lathe that was subsequently reduced to 1 minute 45 seconds on a DECO 20a," he confirms. "There are many more examples where cycle times have been at least halved, with many operations reduced to just one."

Yet despite the significant reductions in cycle time and number of operations, Mussett Engineering witnesses no compromise in quality from its Tornos machines.

"The quality of the machines and the quality of the products they produce were primary reasons behind our decision to buy Tornos," explains Mr Mussett. "If we get our bar preparation right, these machines have no problem holding micron tolerances time-after-time."

A three-shift system allows Mussett Engineering to run 24 hours a day for nearly seven days. Using only one operator to oversee both Tornos machines permits the company to price its products extremely competitively in what has become a tough marketplace. Yet such is the economy of the machines that Mr Mussett says he doesn't always need large volumes to bolster the bottom line.

"We've put batches as small as 200 on the Tornos machines," he says. "For long, slender shaft work there isn't much that can beat these machines, even for low volumes."

Such is the success of the current contract for writing implement components that both Tornos machines are fully loaded for the foreseeable future.

"It's true that we haven't got much capacity to sell on these machines at present," says Mr Mussett. "The only way we can fit other jobs in is to get ahead and make a gap in the schedule, but that's not a bad situation to be in is it?" he says light heartedly.

The pattern of growth at Mussett Engineering shows no signs of abating. In fact, it is only the local shortage of skilled labour that is holding the company back. Such is the extent of the problem that Mr Mussett has resorted to advertising as far afield as

the Midlands in an attempt to attract skilled people to relocate.

"If we could find 25 skilled people tomorrow, we could find jobs for them," he says. "We will expand only as fast as we can find the right personnel. However, we do not let our customers down. We offer realistic delivery times and stick to them. For this reason we have probably turned down as much work as we have taken on lately. It is easy to say 'yes' when new work presents itself but I don't believe in making promises that will be tough to keep."

With a bulging order book Mussett Engineering has to get maximum output from all of its machine tools and the DECO models are no exception.

"Thankfully the reliability of the Tornos machines has been exceptional," concludes Mr Mussett, "which is a relief because we cannot afford to have a single moment of downtime at present. Both machines are excellent servants to this company."



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