

# CORRESPONDENCE

From Mr. AUGUSTINE COURTAULD

SIR,

I write to acquaint you of a sad and little known event; namely, the demise of the Orfordness Rotating Beacon.

As you are probably aware, this useful aid to navigation was put into operation as an experiment in 1926. Its accuracy was tested by Trinity House from known positions in the Thames Estuary and many reports were received from sea, mostly bearings taken by merchant ships, some as far as the Mediterranean. The results of these were published by the Stationery Office in a pamphlet and they showed that the beacon was capable of giving bearings with a maximum error of 2 degrees all round the compass. The only instruments that were required were an ordinary wireless receiving set and a stop-watch.

In spite of the success of this first beacon, no others appear to have been erected and this one has now been allowed to die out although its existence and characteristics are still given in current almanacs. I have myself found it extremely useful when making the land in thick weather from the North Sea and on some occasions it would not have been wise to continue without help from its bearings.

I hope it may be possible for such an organisation as the Institute of Navigation, which has the interest of small ships at heart, to do something to protest against the suppression of this most useful aid to navigation.

Yours faithfully,  
A. COURTAULD.

*Spencers,  
Gt. Yeldham,  
Essex.*

The following note on the beacon has been supplied by a member. It is hoped that comment on the use of Consol by small ships will be received by the Institute.  
EDITOR

This beacon, which was operated by the Admiralty throughout the war, was closed down after consideration by the appropriate Ministry of Transport committee. Shipping and lighthouse authorities were represented on the committee and it would seem that no substantial requirement for the beacon's continued operation was brought forward by them. The upkeep of this type of beacon is more expensive than that of the omni-beacon type and, in view of the recent advances in radio-navigational devices, the Ministry of Transport view is that the erection of new beacons of a similar type would not be justified either technically or economically. Its description in the *Admiralty List of Radio Signals*, Vol. II, will probably continue to be given, as there are beacons of similar performance still operating in other parts of the world. An amendment will be made to the A.L.R.S. to indicate that the Orfordness beacon has been discontinued.

It is suggested that Consol can provide an adequate alternative for small ship use, as this system (giving an accuracy in bearing of half a degree within 1500 miles) also requires no shipborne equipment beyond an M.F. receiver.