

picture this
A DAY IN FEBRUARY

'These steel structures look like aliens resting before continuing their long walk across the ocean,' says photographer Chris Laurens of his shot of the Red Sands Fort in the Thames Estuary. The fort, designed by civil engineer Guy Maunsell, is one of three that were towed down the river and lowered on to the seabed by hand winch in 1943 to provide anti-aircraft fire during the Second World War. Once inhabited by 265 men, it is now deserted: following occupation by pirate radio stations, the Admiralty removed access ladders. A conservation project, Project Redsand, is raising money to restore the Fort to its original built condition, and wants to reinstate access.

Chris travelled the 12 miles from Herne Bay to the Forts in his ski boat. 'It is quite a long sea journey but one I was keen to make,' he says. 'I like to visit every few years.' For those keen to replicate his journey and see these otherworldly structures up close, *Greta*, a Thames sailing barge, sails there on frequent day trips.

*For info on the fort's conservation, see project-redsand.com.
For more on the sailing day trips, see greta1892.co.uk. Chris's work can be seen at laurensphotos.com.*

