

CASTLES

OF

STEEL

BY

NICK WRAY

A PLAY FOR RADIO SET AGAINST
THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND 1916

CASTLES OF STEEL

A 60-minute radio drama set against the Battle of Jutland, 1916

BY NICK WRAY

"One man can lose WW1 in an afternoon...
...but which man is it?"

Part 5 of 5 (Scenes 29 – 37)

The full text of 'Castles of Steel' by Nick Wray is now available on Amazon in print and e-book. <u>Click here.</u>

More information at: www.castlesofsteel.com

Copyright © 2018 by Nick Wray All rights reserved.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other non-commercial uses permitted by copyright law.

For permission requests, press, interviews etc. contact the publisher, addressed "Attention: Permissions Coordinator," via nick@nickwray.com

Published by Nick Wray nick@nickwray.com

Illustration and cover design: MTA Smith
Illustration copyright: MTA Smith 2018 all rights reserved

See more at https://unbound.com/books/sir-gawain/ and www.mythicalbritain.co.uk

Biography

Nick Wray is a freelance writer who also works on 'Futures' projects. Nick has written for the Independent, Screen Digest and Viewfinder, as well as other publications and media. Nick has an MA in Interactive Media from the Royal College of Art and his polemic on the digital world, The Living Garden, won the ICL-Fujitsu prize for innovation in media. Nick's short play 'Heart of Glass', about Google Glass, was recently shortlisted by the Finsbury Theatre, London 'Little Pieces of Gold' competition.

Nick is currently working on '<u>Lunch with Jason King</u>' - a collection of short stories & bedtime tales from the past, present & future of the Digital Age.

CAST & FANTASY CASTING SUGGESTIONS

Gunner Armstrong (middle aged) - Bernard Hill/Jerome Flyn/Robson Green

<u>Vice-Admiral David Beatty</u> – Jellicoe's second in command (the cruiser fleet) – **Matthew**MacFadyen/ Peter Firth/ Michael Fassbender/Anthony Hopkins/Christian Bale

Winston Churchill - Voice talent/doubling

<u>Jack Cornwell</u> (16 year old boy gunner from Leyton) – Voice talent

Lily Cornwell – Jack's mother – Julie Walters

John 'Jacky' Fisher (Ex-First Sea Lord and naval driving force of the Dreadnought) - Ian Holm

<u>Lieutenant Grant</u> – Jellicoe's gunnery officer – **David Tennant/Ewan McGregor**

<u>Admiral John Jellicoe</u> – Commander in Chief of the British Grand Fleet (the Battleship fleet) – Ralph Fiennes/Jeremy Irons/Colin Firth/Ben Kingsley

<u>Lord Kitchener</u> (Secretary of State for War) – Voice talent

<u>Lieutenant Ralph Seymour</u> ('Flags') – Beatty's signal officer – **Kenneth Branagh/Rupert Everett**

*

This work 'Castles of Steel', a play for radio, is a *fictional interpretation and re-telling* of the real events and characters in the contentious WW1 naval engagement of 1916 known as the Battle of Jutland, in which the British and German fleets met *en masse* for the first and only time during the course of the First World War...

不





Production notes

Lightest to heaviest ships have different acoustics to establish size:

HMS Chester (Jack) Lightest armoured scout: highest pitched engines, but harmonic.

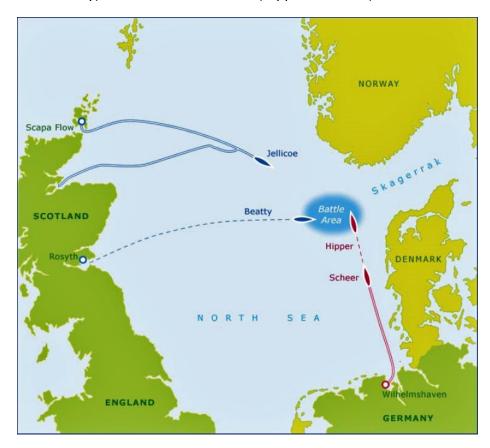
A happy ship.

HMS Lion (Beatty) a large cruiser: acoustic mid-range bass, but dissonant. HMS Lion's engines etc. always have a discordant quality (rising with the action)

HMS Iron Duke (Jellicoe) Largest battleship: deepest, most powerful, but also harmonic acoustic. Include theme of chess clock ticking (UNDER) each time scene opens

"Der Tag!" Map of the Jutland/Skagerrak battle area

The 'Jutland' battle area (blue, below) where the British Fleets (commanded by Jellicoe & Beatty) Met the German Fleets (Hipper & Scheer) in 1916



Reproduced with kind permission of Battle-of-Jutland.com whose excellent Battle of Jutland map and image resource pack is available at www.Battle-of-Jutland.com

SCENE 29.

EXT – SCAPA FLOW

FX (FADE IN) WIND AND SEA AT SCAPA FLOW. HAWSERS

CLANGING LIKE CHURCH BELLS. SEAGULL SCREECHES.

ARMSTRONG FINISHES SOLO VERSION OF HEARTS OF OAK.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Thank you Gunner (BEAT) Mister//

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Mister.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Mister, Armstrong. (AWKWARD SILENCE)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: We all liked, Jack, Mrs Cornwell. I'm sorry for your loss.

(PAUSE)

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: What really happened, Mr Armstrong?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (BEAT) Well. Just like the papers are saying, Mrs Cornwell.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Lily.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Lily. (FALSE BONHOMIE) Laughing and singing up to the end.

Keen as mustard, he was, Lily. We all was, if I'm honest.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Did he (PAUSE) suffer?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (FALTERING FALSE BONHOMIE) Didn't feel a thing. Bang, out

of the blue it came. Luck of the draw. Well bad luck

(APOLOGETICALLY) If you get my drift. Happy ship we was. Just

(PAUSE) bad luck. We'd been playing trumps 10 minutes

before, you know.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: His cigarette cards? The one's I sent him?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: He kept winning hands down, too. Full set, he had, too. 'part

from the Kaiser's ships.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Can I see them?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (PAUSE) His cards?

FX GUST OF WIND. DISCORDANT CLANGING OF METAL WIRES

FROM SHIPS AT SCAPA.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: You have them? (PAUSE)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: I'm. I'm not sure where I left them, Mrs Cornwell. (BEAT)

Lily.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: You have them, don't you? Why won't you let me see them?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: They're just a bit. They're //

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: Please? Open your hands. Let me see.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: You don't want to see, Mrs Cornwell, no!

FX SOUND OF MRS CORNWELL TAKING GUNNER ARMSTRONG'S

<u>HANDS</u>

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Please. Don't, Lily. Don't look. Please!

FX SOUND OF CARDS BEING TAKEN AND VIEWED ONE-BY-ONE

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: (GRIEF/WEEPING PULLED BACK).

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: I'm sorry. I'm really sorry. I couldn't. I tried. I really tried. I just

couldn't get it out of 'em.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: (OBLIVIOUS, BARELY RESTRAINING GRIEF) There you go Jack,

me love. Sleep peacefully, now my boy. The sea'll wash them

clean for you.

FX SOUND OF CARDS LANDING IN THE SEA AND WAVES FALLING

(FADE DOWN)

SCENE 30.

EXT – NORTH SEA. STORM.

FX	(FADE UP HM:	S HAMPSHIRE SAILING IN STORM. WIND & RAIN.
	SOUND OF EX	PLOSION AND CRIES AS SHIP HITS MINE. SOS
	MORSE CODE.	SOUND OF SHIP FOUNDERING (FADE DOWN)
VOICE OVER:	The Times:	6th June 1916: With deep regret we record
	that Earl Kitch	ener, Secretary for War, went down with the
	armoured crui	ser Hampshire, and 650 hands, West of the
	Orkneys, last n	ight, after hitting a mine laid by a German U-
	Boat. Lord Kito	hener was on his way to the Russian port of

Archangel... (FADE OUT)

SCENE 31.

INT – ARMY & NAVY CLUB

FX	BACKGROUND GENTLEMEN'S CLUB MURMURS. DRINKS.
CHURCHILL:	Don't be hard on yourself, Fisher. It's not your fault.
FISHER:	No Winston. It isn't! It's the German's fault. For running away. It's Beatty's fault for running away!
CHURCHILL:	The <i>press</i> think its <i>Jellicoe's</i> fault. For running (BEAT) for not pressing home the attack.
FISHER:	At dusk! Into smoke and haze? Into U-Boats? And fast torpedo destroyers and God knows what, else?
CHURCHILL:	Still, at the end of the day, the German Fleet ran back to mother. Our losses are negligible and we've given them a black eye.
FISHER:	Not exactly the Trafalgar Two Point Zero you wanted, though, is it?
CHURCHILL:	C'est la guerre? You've heard the news, I take it?
FISHER:	Kitchener?
CHURCHILL:	Yes. Shame.

FISHER: (SARCASTICALLY) That Lloyd George wasn't on the mission

with him, as planned?

CHURCHILL: (LAUGHS). Not just that. I wanted to sound Kitchener out

about an idea I'd had for armoured 'land ships', for the next

big push. Still. One advantage of all this//

FISHER: //(SARCASTICALLY) Oh do tell!

CHURCHILL: If the German Fleet won't fight us//

FISHER: Man-to-man?

CHURCHILL: Or ship-to-ship.

FISHER: Well?

CHURCHILL: Well, one advantage, is that the Kaiser's going to have to go

back to submarines. And if he does that //

FISHER: Winston?

CHURCHILL: // they'll probably end up drowning some more Americans.

FISHER: Winston!

CHURCHILL: Well If it wasn't for them sinking Lusitania last year, we might

have ended up with the United States against us in this war.

They have a point. Our starvation blockade does rather

interfere with 'free-trade'.

FISHER: So what's to be done?

CHURCHILL: Word is that Beatty's odds-on to take over command of the

entire fleet?

FISHER: What! From Jellicoe?

CHURCHILL: Yes. All's fair in love and war?

FISHER: Beatty? After the mess he left at Jutland? Anyway, he's got no

manners and an impossible American wife! Isn't she (BEAT)

consorting elsewhere, these days?

CHURCHILL: Beatty may be 'rudderless', but think about it, Fisher. He got

(BEAT) blooded?

FISHER: Beatty shed more of his own men's claret than the Huns'!

CHURCHILL: But still, he hurt *some* of their ships //

FISHER: He lost 14 of our ships including three of his own cruisers

against 11 of theirs. Most of which I hasten to add, Jellicoe

bagged. All Beatty had to do was tell Jellicoe where to find the

German fleet. That's all. And what did he do? He blundered in.

He fumbled the ball. We could have killed the fox.

CHURCHILL: You're mixing your metaphors. (ASIDE) Waiter, Champagne

Cocktail (NORMAL) Still you owe me a Guinea, I think?

FISHER: No! You owe me a Guinea. It was Beatty's fault! If he had only

told Jellicoe what was happening, sooner, we could have

destroyed them all.

CHURCHILL: Shall we call it a draw, then?

FISHER: (PAUSE) Done!

CHURCHILL: So, we are where we are.

FISHER: Back where we were. Yes. It was rather a damp squib, wasn't

it?

CHURCHILL: Therefore?

FISHER: Yes, yes, I get it. We need to distract the public //

CHURCHILL: Exactly! //

FISHER: And your press!

CHURCHILL: So?

FISHER: So. We need a hero?

CHURCHILL: Bravo! And I may have found one. Cornlaw, or something. A

boy seaman off the Chester. Now, he could fit the bill quite

nicely.

FISHER: Wasn't he shell shocked?

CHURCHILL: No one needs to know he was lolling round like a headless

chicken.

FISHER: Legless, I think?

CHURCHILL: Whatever. The papers don't know the real story, and I've

pulled a few strings. He'll get a gong, which should be good

enough for a few morale boosting column inches.

(HOPEFULLY) And if he dies, who knows, he may even get

upgraded to a Victoria Cross?

FISHER: Really, Winston sometimes//

CHURCHILL: So, we have a hero. Can we further distract attention with a

(PAUSE)?

FISHER: Villain?

CHURCHILL: Your words, not mine. But Beatty's friends are already planting

stories: 'Jellicoe and his band of tardy battleship brothers'

from what I hear. Very chummy with the press that man. He'll

go far!

FISHER: Jellicoe will be devastated.

CHURCHILL: We'll throw him a bone. People will forget soon enough.

FISHER: If only it hadn't been so late in the day. If only we could have

pressed home the attack. If only we'd been able to hit a few

more //

FX WAITER'S FOOTSTEPS. APPROACHES WITH DRINKS

CHURCHILL: Ah, our drinks. The match is over. Time to move on. Anyway,

we're giving the Army another turn at them next month.

FX CHAMPAGNE CORK POPS DRINKS TAKEN

FISHER: And where will this spectacular be?

CHURCHILL: Good ring to it. Place called the Somme.

SCENE 32.

INT - CORNWELL'S MOTHER'S HOUSE.

FX	KNOCK ON FRONT DOOF
FX	KNOCK ON FRONT DOO

POSTMAN: Hello Mrs Cornwell. Making yourself a nice cuppa?

CORNWELL'S MOTHER: (WARY) Special Delivery? For me?

POSTMAN: You have a nice sit down.

FX DOOR CLOSES AS POSTMAN LEAVES. WE HEAR KETTLE

BEGINNING TO HEAT UP IN BACKGROUND. CORNWELL'S

MOTHER SITS DOWN AT WOODEN TABLE. WE HEAR CHINKS

OF A TEACUP. SHE OPENS AND READS LETTER.

CHURCHILL (as V/O): 14th July, 1916. Dear Mrs Cornwell. I thought you might

appreciate something I chanced upon in the Spectator. Your

Servant. Winston S Churchill.

CORNWELL'S MOTHER/V/O: (CORNWELL'S MOTHER BEGINS READING OUT THEN CROSS

FADE VOICE OF INCREASINGLY ZEALOUS AUTHOR WHICH

SHOULD BE SPED UP, HIGH PITCHED AND INCREASING FAST.

NARRATION TO MERGE WITH HIGH PITCHED KETTLE AT END

OF NARRATION) "Several suggestions have been made for

honouring the memory of Jack Cornwell so that the lustre of

his deed may shine where boys and girls are quick to catch the

reflection of lofty and honourable conduct. Cornwell's

photograph should be hung in every elementary school. But surely much more is possible and desirable? A statue could serve the purpose of inspiring every school in the land.

Photographs of the statue could then be distributed, and so a double effect would be achieved; the figure of the boy would stand out much more imposingly and children would learn how great deeds earn reward in great art? How they move the powers of lyrical expression, of reverence, or of admiration in an artist's brain. And why one, and not two statues (FADE UP KETTLE BOILING OVER NARRATION) [EDITED FROM AN ORIGINAL SPECTATOR EDITORIAL FROM 14TH JULY 1916]

OVER NARRATION FADE UP AND OVER KETTLE SCREAMING

FX

SCENE 33.

FX IMPRESSIONISTIC SOUND MONTAGE TO SIGNIFY TWO MORE

YEARS OF FIGHTING:

V/O "November 11, 1918. The terms of the Armistice include the

surrender at Scapa Flow of all 74 remaining German fighting

vessels including battleships, battle cruisers, light cruisers,

destroyers and submarines." (FADE OUT)

EXT – SCAPA FLOW.

FX BRITISH SAILORS CHEERING SURRENDER OF GERMAN FLEET

AT SCAPA FLOW

GRANT: What an innings! Four years, 14 weeks and two days.

SEYMOUR: And the Germans were still batting, despite our best efforts.

GRANT: It's not really batting if they stay in the pavilion, is it? Look at

the state of them.

SEYMOUR: The ships?

GRANT: The men and the ships!

SEYMOUR: Discipline collapsed in the last months. They mutinied in

Wilhelmshaven.

GRANT: I'm not surprised, cooped up in port like that for two whole

years after Jutland.

SEYMOUR: You know Beatty's claiming all this as his bag, don't you?

GRANT: Yes.

SEYMOUR: He's coming up to Scapa to take their formal surrender.

FX CHEERS OF SAILORS GET LOUDER

GRANT: I'd heard.

SEYMOUR: So what about Jellicoe?

FX FADE DOWN BRITISH SAILORS CHEERING INTO SLOW CHESS

CLOCK-LIKE TICKING FOR NEXT SCENE

SCENE 34.

INT – JELLICOE'S CABIN HMS IRON DUKE.

BACKGROUND OF BRITISH SAILORS CHEERING SURRENDER OF
GERMAN FLEET AT SCAPA FLOW. CHESS CLOCK TICKING.
KNOCKING. PAUSE. REPEATED.
Grant! It's good to see you. Come in. Come in. I'm sorry. I
didn't hear you knocking.
I'm afraid my hands are still pretty useless these days. Even for
knocking.
I'm sorry to hear that. Your face is (PAUSE) your other burns
are healing well. And the pain?
Nighting to conite house about Circ At least the condense of a con-
Nothing to write home about, Sir. At least the war's over, now.
So when will you be marrying that charming fiancée of yours?
She (BEAT) we called it off, Sir. (PAUSE). I came to let you
know. The German ships. They're arriving for the surrender.
Sir? (PAUSE) Admiral?
Lwon't he there Crent
I won't be there, Grant.
Sir?

I've (BEAT) not been invited.

JELLICOE:

GRANT: (OUTRAGED) What?

JELLICOE: Now, now. No need for the fleet to mutiny. Anyway, I have to

pack.

GRANT: Pack?

JELLICOE: I'm leaving the fleet. For a desk job.

GRANT: It's wrong, Sir. The men, everyone, will say so.

JELLICOE: That means a lot to me, Grant.

GRANT: The men wanted me to give you this, Sir.

JELLICOE: What is it?

GRANT: It's a chess set sir.

JELLICOE: I'm going to have plenty of time to practise my endgame.

GRANT: Every man on the *Iron Duke* had a hand in it.

FX SOUND OF CHESS BOX BEING HANDED OVER

(PAUSE) Time for one last game? I'm afraid you'll have to

move my pieces for me.

JELLICOE: Thank you, Grant, but no. I've rather lost my taste for chess at

the moment.

SCENE 35.

INT - BEATTY'S CABIN. HMS LION

FX	IMPRESSIONISTIC MIX OF GROANING SINKING SHIPS WITH

BEATTY'S NIGHTMARE

BEATTY: (MID-NIGHTMARE) No, no. they can't! Come back. They're

mine! They're mine

FX IMPRESSIONISTIC MIX OF GROANING SINKING SHIPS WITH

BEATTY'S NIGHTMARE RISES TO CRESCENDO

SEYMOUR ENTERS

SEYMOUR: Admiral Beatty, Admiral Beatty! Wake up Sir.

BEATTY: (SLEEPILY) Waa, what is it? Seymour. Thank goodness. I was

dreaming. (RELIEVED LAUGHTER) The Germans. They were

sinking their own ships!

SEYMOUR: They have. They've scuttled them! In Scapa. Their entire fleet.

All of them! I was coming to tell you.

BEATTY: (ANGRY REALISATION) What? What! They can't! They were

mine! Mine!

FX (FADE UP) ANGRY GROANING OF SINKING GERMAN SHIPS

SCENE 36.

V/O

(OFFICIOUS VOICE). 21st June 1919. "Dear Mrs Cornwell. We are sorry to learn of your circumstances following the death of your husband, Eli, and son Arthur whilst on active service. We have taken this into consideration. However, the committee of the Boy Cornwell Fund are of a mind that, under our articles of incorporation, we cannot offer you the financial assistance you request. Public donations were made solely for the creation and maintenance of artworks to commemorate your son, Jack Cornwell's, heroism, *im memoriam*. We now consider this matter closed. I remain your servant, etc...

SCENE 37.

INT – ARMY & NAVY CLUB. GRANT ENTERS

FX	BACKGROUND GENTLEMEN'S CLUB MURMURS. DRINKS.
GRANT:	Admiral Beatty.
BEATTY:	Earl Beatty. What do you want Seymour? You look like you've been in the wars?
GRANT:	I'm Grant, Sir. Seymour commit/ Seymour's been dea//
BEATTY:	//Yes, yes. Foolish man. I kept telling him my niece wasn't interested. Messy business. (PAUSE)
GRANT:	A Player?
BEATTY:	What?
GRANT:	A cigarette?
FX	SOUND OF CIGARETTE CASE BEING OFFERED
BEATTY:	Navy Cut, eh? Apt. I will. Thank you.
FX	SOUND OF CIGARETTE BEING TAKEN FROM CASE AND LIT.
BEATTY:	You've dropped something. On the carpet. There. What is it?
GRANT:	A cigarette card. My nephew collects them.

FX BEATTY BENDS DOWN AND PICKS UP CARD.

BEATTY: Let's see. I can't read it. Who is it? Nelson? Me! (PAUSE) Come

on man? Well?

GRANT: It's Jack Cornwell, Sir. (PAUSE) Jack Cornwell. Victoria Cross.

(SILENCE). You've heard? The news?

BEATTY: Admiral Jellicoe?

GRANT: Sir.

BEATTY: Yes. I'd heard.

GRANT: Will your wife be coming to the service, Sir?

BEATTY: (DISBELIEVING) My wife?

BEATTY: Seymour.

GRANT: It's Grant, Sir.

BEATTY: What will they say if I fail to attend?

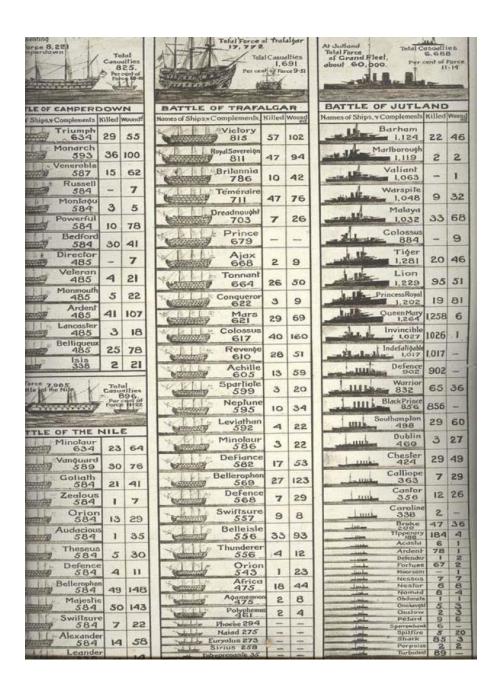
GRANT: What will they say if you do? (PAUSE) Sir.

GRAMS (FADE UP) ORCHESTRAL VERSION OF 'HEARTS OF OAK' OR SECTION FROM ROYAL MARINES BAND BEATING

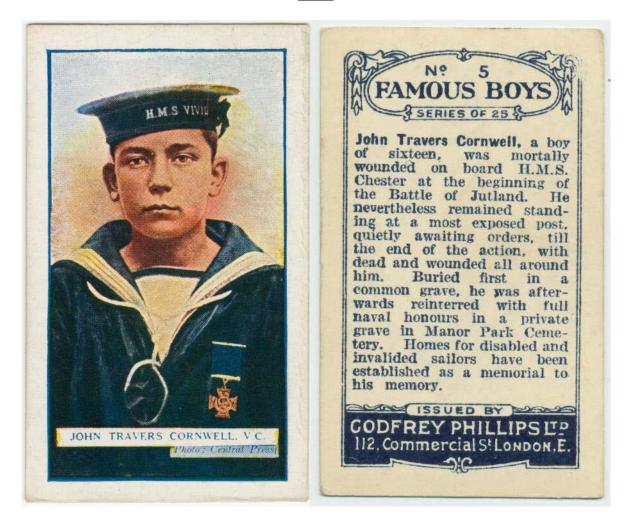
RETREAT FROM HMS VICTORY

*** END ***

Castles of Steel by Nick Wray



<u>RIP</u>



The full text of 'Castles of Steel' by Nick Wray is now available on Amazon in print and e-book. <u>Click here.</u>

Copyright © 2018 by Nick Wray All rights reserved.

Contact the author: nick@nickwray.com