



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 4 of 5 (Scenes 22 – 28)

The full text of ‘Castles of Steel’ by Nick Wray is now available
on Amazon in print and e-book. [Click here.](#)

More information at: www.castlesofsteel.com

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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 '[Lunch with Jason King](#)' - 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**

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

Winston Churchill – Voice talent/doubling

Jack Cornwell (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**

Lieutenant Grant – Jellicoe’s gunnery officer – **David Tennant/Ewan McGregor**

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

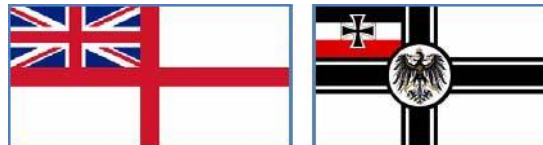
Lord Kitchener (Secretary of State for War) – Voice talent

Lieutenant Ralph Seymour (‘Flags’) – Beatty’s signal officer – **Kenneth Branagh/Rupert Everett**

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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...

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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



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SCENE 22.

INT – ADMIRALTY WAR ROOM. EVENING.

FX VERY LOW HUBBUB WITH SOUND OF CLOCK TICKING.

CHURCHILL: Still no news?

FISHER: Not a pip. Not a squeak. From Beatty or Jellicoe. Poor show.
They promised to keep us up to date on the scoreboard.

FX PHONE RINGS. FISHER ANSWERS IT

FISHER: (TO PHONE) Fisher, here. Yes? What? What? How's that possible?

CHURCHILL: News?

FISHER: (TO PHONE) Oh my God! All of them?

FX FISHER HANGS UP

CHURCHILL: Well?

FISHER: (PAUSE) Winston. Somehow, the German battleships. They slipped out.

KITCHENER: So much for naval intelligence?

FISHER:

Winston. Their battleships are with their cruisers! We're facing all of them. One hundred enemy ships. We're facing the Kaiser's entire High Seas Fleet.

SCENE 23.

INT BRIDGE (WHEELHOUSE) OF HMS LION.

FX BACKGROUND SOUND OF SALVOES FIRED BY BRITISH AND
GERMAN SHIPS

SEYMOUR: Vice-Admiral Beatty, Sir! Heavy smoke beyond the German
cruisers.

BEATTY: That'll be Jellicoe.

SEYMOUR: (UNDER) Saved by the bell.

FX POWERFUL HIGH PITCHED GERMAN SALVO ARRIVES
WITHOUT WARNING FOLLOWED BY SEVERAL NEARBY
EXPLOSIONS IN THE SEA THEN AN EXPLOSION ON LION

BEATTY: Christ! Where did that come from?

SEYMOUR: Forward turret's hit, Sir. Look. Peeled back like a sardine tin.

BEATTY: Those aren't Jellicoe's battleships on the horizon: they're
the Kaiser's battleships!

FX FADE TO SOUNDS OF FORWARD TURRET TEAM ON LION
FIGHTING FIRES

VOICES: (SHOUTS AND CALLS AS GUN CREW TRY TO DEAL WITH FIRE)

GRANT: (GRANT'S VOICE EMERGES ON INTERCOM FROM TURRET ABOVE CLAMOUR) Grant here. Forward magazine. Close all fire doors, close the fire doors, now! It's burning back! (SOUNDS DISTRESSED, IN PAIN) Flood the magazine, flood the magazine!

FX FADE BACK TO BRIDGE

SEYMOUR: (PANICKED) He was right. Grant was right. We're going to go up like the others.

BEATTY: (RATTLED) Don't be ridiculous, Seymour.

SEYMOUR: (PANICKED) I thought we were supposed to be supporting Jellicoe, not trying to win the war on our own?

BEATTY: (RATTLED) Shut up, Seymour. Two points towards the enemy.

FX VERY LOUD EXPLOSION. GLASS ON THE BRIDGE BREAKS. DISSONANCE RISES TO DISCORDANT RINGING IN EARS. MORE SHELLS ZERO IN AND LAND CLOSE.

No. Wait. Over there! A periscope!

SEYMOUR/VOICES: What? How on earth? Submarine? Where? I can't see anything.

BEATTY:

Four points away, break contact! Break contact and run!

SCENE 24.

INT – BRIDGE (WHEELHOUSE) OF HMS IRON DUKE.

FX SOUNDS OF ACTIVITY ON BRIDGE. VERY DISTANT
EXPLOSIONS.

NUMBER 2: There they are! Beatty's cruisers, Sir, bearing South East.

JELLICOE: At last. Thank you, Number 2?

NUMBER 2: What's that? Drawing out of the haze. We've sighted the German cruiser body, Admiral Jellicoe. See, just beyond Beatty. Jesus! Sorry, Sir! There are loads of them!

JELLICOE: Something's wrong. Engage enemy cruisers at will.

FX SOUNDS OF BRITISH GUN FIRE

NUMBER 2: Sir! Reports coming in. From everywhere. It's not just German cruisers. It's their battleships, too. All of them!

JELLICOE: Where the hell did they come from? What's the time, Number 2.

NUMBER 2: Sixteen hundred hours. We've only a couple of hours light, left, Sir.

JELLICOE: (PAUSE) Damn! If only we'd known sooner. But, if we can bring all our guns to bear, we might still be able to get the edge on them. Signal Beatty: cruisers to join us in support.

NUMBER 2: Beatty's turning to join us. Look's like *Lion's* taken a beating, though. (QUIETLY) Where's *Indefatigable*, Queen Mary. Where's *Invincible*? Good God! They're breaking off. Beatty's turning for home, Sir! He's running. He's running away.

FX SOUNDS OF GERMAN SHELLS LANDING NEAR & HITTING THE SEA

NUMBER 2: German battleships have our range, Admiral.

JELLICOE: Thank you. Signal all battleships. Open fire and close, Number 2.

FX CACOPHONY AS BRITISH BATTLESHIPS FIRE

NUMBER 2: Hang on. Smoke's clearing again. No, that's impossible. Now, they've turned. The entire German High Seas Fleet. All of them. Now, they're running from us! What do we do next, Admiral Jellicoe? What do we do!?

FX FADE ON BRITISH GUN FIRE

SCENE 25.

INT – ADMIRALTY WAR ROOM. EVENING.

FX LOW HUB BUB OF VOICES REPORTING SCRAPS OF NEWS
FROM FLEET WITH SOUND OF CLOCK TICKING. STRIKES SIX IN
THE EVENING

CHURCHILL: It's been hours. Anything?

FISHER: Nothing. What on earth's happening out there?

FX TICKER TAPE TELEGRAPH MESSAGE ARRIVING

FISHER: It's Jellicoe. Wait a minute.

FX TICKER TAPE TELEGRAPH MESSAGE CONTINUES

The Hun has run!

FX TICKER TAPE TELEGRAPH MESSAGE ARRIVING

FISHER: (READING OUT STACCATO) 'Light failing. Enemy submarine
and destroyer activity reported' (NORMAL) It could be a trap!

FX TICKER TAPE TELEGRAPH MESSAGE ARRIVING

FISHER: Jellicoe's withdrawing the fleet back to Scapa.

CHURCHILL: (ANGUISHED) *Withdrawing?* I thought we were supposed to be playing to win? We need to talk. Somewhere more private, Fisher. Away from all this.

SCENE 26.

INT – JELLICOE’S CABIN HMS IRON DUKE.

FX IRON DUKE AT ANCHOR IN SCAPA FLOW. SOUND OF CLOCK
TICKING. GRANT ENTERS.

JELLICOE: Glad you made it back to Scapa in (PAUSE) in one piece, Grant.
How are your burns?

GRANT: Skin deep, Sir. Just (BEAT) Skin deep. (PAUSE)

JELLICOE: Tea?

GRANT: Thank you, Sir.

FX GRANT HAS DIFFICULTY TAKING CUP THEN DROPS IT. BREAKS

I’m sorry. My hands. The bandages. Perhaps I’ll leave it for
now, Sir.

JELLICOE: I’m so sorry, Grant. (PAUSE) How’s Beatty?

GRANT: I don’t think Commander Beatty liked being towed back, Sir.

JELLICOE: I’m sure he didn’t. (BEAT) I’ve just been cabled this. It’s
already been reported in the *Times*. Read it.

GRANT: (READS OUT THEN FADE TO GERMAN ACCENT) "At today's meeting of the Reichstag, the President said: 'In the North Sea a big naval battle has taken place - the first collision between our naval forces and the pick of the English Fleet. Detailed messages are still lacking, but it may already be said that our young navy has gained a great and splendid success.'" What!

JELLICOE: Go on.

GRANT: (READS OUT THEN FADE TO GERMAN ACCENT) "'Several of our fine ships, indeed, have been lost and many of our brave sailors have perished, but the enemy losses are several times greater. Above all, proof has been given that our fleet is able to face a superior British naval force and gain a victory for which we salute and thank our navy.'"

Victory? But they ran away. We beat *them* off!

JELLICOE: Let's wait for the umpire's verdict, shall we? Once we've buried our dead.

SCENE 27.

INT – GRIMSBY HOSPITAL WARD

FX HARD, ECHOEY, FOOTSTEPS ETC HOSPITAL ACOUSTIC. MOANS
OF WOUNDED IN BACKGROUND.

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: (GENTLY) Hello Jack. I've bought your cards. Like I promised.

JACK CORNWELL: (WEAKLY & FRIGHTENED) Where, where am I Mr Armstrong?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Grimsby Hospital, Lad. (FALSE JOLLITY) The doctor's going to put you on a diet of fish and cod liver oil. That'll sort you out.

JACK CORNWELL: (CRIES OUT IN PAIN)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: Hang on, Jack. You're half-way home, now.

JACK CORNWELL: (WEAKLY) Home. (CRIES OUT IN PAIN)

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: They're doing everything they can Jack.

JACK CORNWELL: (CRYING, WEAKLY FADING OUT) Where's my mum?

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: They've telegraphed her, Jack. She'll be here in two shakes of a lamb's tail.

JACK CORNWELL: (WEAKLY) Mum? I want my mum, I want my (TRAILS OFF AS JACK DIES).

GUNNER ARMSTRONG: You'll be right as rain, Jack? (REALISES JACK HAS DIED). Oh no.
(SOBBING) Jack. Jack!

SCENE 28.

INT – JELLICOE’S CABIN HMS IRON DUKE.

FX AT ANCHOR. SOUND OF SEA IN BACKGROUND. CHESS-LIKE
CLOCK TICKING.

JELLICOE: Lord Kitchener. Delighted to meet you! How was your journey?

KITCHENER: I took the Special from King’s Cross.

JELLICOE: You poor man! You’ll have contracted scurvy! You’ll be needing some refreshment?

KITCHENER: Thank you.

JELLICOE: Tea?

KITCHENER: As I’m amongst Navy men, a pink gin, if I may?

JELLICOE: Of course.

FX SOUND OF DRINK BEING Poured

KITCHENER: On the train I couldn’t help but think your sailors’ uniforms are so much more (BEAT) becoming than our boys’ Olive Drab.

FX SOUND OF ICE AS GLASS HANDED TO K

Thank you. Such, such charming young fellows, too.

(WISTFULLY). Charming.

JELLICOE: (COUGHS) Your ship to Archangel will sail later tonight. I've given you HMS Hampshire. A fine armoured cruiser. You'll dine with me, first?

KITCHENER: I fear not. My sea legs are weak, I'm afraid. I was rather ill even on the crossing over to you from Wick. Though my first name is Horatio!

JELLICOE: Nelson suffered terrible sea sickness.

KITCHENER: Nelson had Trafalgar, whilst I seem to have met my Waterloo.

JELLICOE: And mine, too, perhaps, at Jutland? What's the mood in London?

KITCHENER: It's over a week since the battle. But the bloody Admiralty have remained on the back foot, ever since the Germans announced their "crushing victory" over us. Why didn't we get our version of the truth out first?

JELLICOE: The Germans were closer to their home ports, so they were first to cable the news agencies //

KITCHENER: Indeed! They may be putting me out to grass, but if there's one thing you don't need to tell me about it's public opinion! God knows, we've had enough bad news to bury.

JELLICOE: And bodies.

KITCHENER: So what? The balance of power is unchanged.

JELLICOE: Seven thousand of our men and boys killed and wounded. Three thousand of theirs.

KITCHENER: That's less than the cost of a day's blood in France. And the press call for *your* blood!

JELLICOE: That bad is it? I see.

KITCHENER: For a handful of men, you've seen off the High Seas Fleet and ensured the safety of our shores, and the British Empire. You didn't lose a single battleship, whilst Beatty lost three of his cruisers for just one of the Hun's. Yet (PAUSE).

JELLICOE: Yes?

KITCHENER: (PAUSE) Well. Beatty does seem to be coming out of it rather well, you know. You need to keep an eye on that young man.

JELLICOE: (LAUGHS)

KITCHENER: What's the joke?

JELLICOE: Chess.

KITCHENER: Chess?

JELLICOE: Perhaps I spent too long wondering what Black would do? And not enough on my white pieces? My Bishops, my (BEAT) *Knights* (PAUSE).

KITCHENER: Beatty certainly moves in mysterious ways. Word to the Wise. Watch that man. (PAUSE) What is it?

JELLICOE: I feel that I have failed.

KITCHENER: Now listen. My life has been one of seeing young men in the prime of their life die. Of seeing boys butchered and maimed for King and Country. Egypt, the Sudan, the Boer War. And now this 'Great' War. My life's work has been death. Odd really, isn't it? (IRONICALLY) Don't you know!

JELLICOE: Yes. I suppose it is. 'Odd'.

KITCHENER: But you, Admiral Jellicoe, have done more than anyone else to avoid unnecessary bloodshed, whilst still ensuring the damnable slaughter will, eventually, end. Hear me, even if it is to one who has already lost his war.

JELLICOE: Your mission to Russia's essential.

KITCHENER: That's kind. Thank you, John. Anyway, go I must.

JELLICOE: There's a storm brewing in the East.

KITCHENER: Well, let's hope the Russian's keep a lid on it.

JELLICOE: I meant the weather. But you're right. If the Tsar gets distracted by the Bolsheviks //

KITCHENER: // the Kaiser will be left free to move all his troops from the Eastern Front against us. Just when it looks like we might be making progress!

STEWARD ENTERS

STEWARD: Sorry to interrupt, Sir. *Hampshire's* ready to sail.

JELLICOE: You'll sail via the West of Scapa.

KITCHENER: West? Not East? Isn't Westwards a longer way round?

JELLICOE: Yes. But, it will be a calmer sea that way. There's a force 10 brewing. I'm probably being overcautious but it should avoid risk of any submarines.

KITCHENER: Thanks to you and the Navy, John, not only am I sure that I won't be clutching my belly, but I know that I'm safe. Safe in the knowledge that the German Fleet's bottled up again in Wilhelmshaven with its tail firmly between its legs!

JELLICOE: Thank you, K. Safe passage.

FX FADE UP HMS HAMPSHIRE SAILING IN STORM. SOUND OF.
KLAXON AND DESPERATE SEAMEN'S CRIES SAILING INTO
TERRIBLE STORM. FADE OUT.

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