





The High Level Ranters

Four In a Bar

Colin Ross *fiddle, pipes*
 Alistair Anderson *concertina, pipes*
 Johnny Handle *accordion, piano,
 4-string guitar*
 Tom Gilfellon *guitar, cittern*

First published by Topic 1979
 Recorded by Mickey Sweeney
 at Impulse Studios July 1978
 Production and design by Tony Engle
 Photography by Terry Harvey
 Notes by Colin Ross

- 1 Jigs: **Whinham's Jig/Billy's Jig**
 Colin *fiddle/pipes*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 2 Reels: **Chips and Shavings/Jack's Alive/Dear Tobacco**
 Colin *fiddle*, Johnny *piano*
- 3 Polkas: **Town Green Polka/Jenny Bell Polka**
 Colin *fiddle*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 4 Hornpipe/Reel: **The Biddlestone Hornpipe/
 The Last of the Twins**
 Colin and Alistair *pipes*, Tom *guitar*, Johnny *piano*
- 5 Hornpipes: **The Ruby/The Quarrelsome Piper**
 Tom *guitar*, Johnny *4-string guitar*
- 6 Hornpipes: **Rowly Burn/Coates's Hornpipe**
 Colin *fiddle*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 7 Rants: **La Russe/The Winshield's Hornpipe/
 Jane's Fancy/Da Road to Houll**
 Colin *fiddle*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 8 Hornpipe/Reel: **Blinkin' Tibbie/The Pear Tree**
 Alistair *concertina*, Johnny *piano*
- 9 Hornpipes: **Swalwell Lasses/South Shields Lasses**
 Colin *fiddle/pipes*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 10 Polka: **Moonshine Polka**
 Johnny *accordion*, Tom *guitar*
- 11 Hornpipe/Reel: **The Quayside/Miss Ward's Reel**
 Colin *fiddle*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Tom *guitar*, Johnny *piano*
- 12 Four Bar Reels: **The Butterclout/Such a Wife As
 Willy Had/Willy Is A Bonny Lad**
 Colin *fiddle*, Alistair *concertina*,
 Tom *cittern*, Johnny *4-string guitar*

The Bar is in the **Bridge Hotel**, Newcastle-upon-Tyne where the Four, the **High Level Ranters** play upstairs on Thursday nights at **Folksong & Ballad**. They have been playing in pubs from the very beginning and when they get down to a session there is little time for singing, which is why you won't hear Johnny or Tommy in action vocally on this record.

What you will hear is the usual instrumental line-up of Colin on fiddle, Alistair on concertina, Johnny on accordion and Tommy on guitar. But you will also hear the lads each taking a solo and playing in various combinations. For example, you will hear Colin and Ali on smallpipes, Johnny on bar piano and 4-string guitar and Tommy on cittern.

Four in a Bar also refers to the time signature of the hornpipe which is such a popular rhythm on Tyneside and in the countryside of Northumberland. Half of the tunes on this record are hornpipes, so the second meaning of the title of this first entirely instrumental album by the Ranters is quite appropriate.

1 Jigs: **Whinham's Jig/Billy's Jig**

Two jigs from two of the best musician/composers the region has produced. Whinham, a fiddler from Morpeth, and the celebrated piper, Billy Pigg. The first tune was called *Me Mother's Jig* in some collections and simply **Whinham's** in others. The band decided to call it after the composer. The second jig, although not composed by Billy Pigg, was played by him and called *I'll Get Wedded in my Old Claes*. However, it bears no relationship to the well-known Scottish jig of the same title and has been found in local manuscript as *The Mayfly* or *The Hexham Quadrille*. To avoid confusion the band call it **Billy's Jig**.

2 Reels: **Chips and Shavings/Jack's Alive/Dear Tobacco**

Three 'four bar' reels from the *Charlton Memorial Tune Book* very much in the style that was favoured 200 years ago on Tyneside. Johnny is playing his own mixture of bar and Northumbrian farmhouse piano style!

3 Polkas: **Town Green Polka/Jenny Bell Polka**

The polka has fallen in popularity as a dance in the North East and as a result the tunes are not often played. It has always been popular with Northumbrian pipers and the band play two from the Society's tune books. They are hoping that this may help start some revival of interest in the dance so that they can get the opportunity to play more tunes in this catchy rhythm.

4 Hornpipe/Reel: **The Biddlestone Hornpipe/The Last of the Twins**

Colin and Ali play pipes together in one of Billy Pigg's typical hornpipes written for the instrument and follow this with an adopted Irish tune that Billy used to play frequently.

5 Hornpipes: **The Ruby/The Quarrelsome Piper**

The easy going pace of the hornpipe allows Tommy's plectrum to pick its way delicately through these two popular tunes.

6 Hornpipes: **Rowly Burn/Coates's Hornpipe**

Once again it is to the pipe players that we look for hornpipes. Forster Charlton, who used to play with the group in the early days, named his tune after a stream in his native Hexhamshire, and the second is another one of Billy Pigg's that doubles up nicely as a reel.

7 Rants: **La Russe/The Winshield's Hornpipe/Jane's Fancy/ Da Road to Houll**

This is a complete setting of **La Russe** if you feel like getting up to do the dance. The band play a lot for dancing and thought that their dancing friends might like to join in with them. The first tune is traditionally played for the dance, the second and the third are popular with the local small-pipers, and the final one is a Shetland tune that the lads have been playing for years.

8 Hornpipe/Reel: **Blinkin' Tibbie/The Pear Tree**

Kohler's Violin Repository contains a wealth of good tunes that Alistair has been dipping into from time to time and has come up with yet another pair of beauties. Johnny coaxes a drawing-room style out of the Northumbrian piano this time.

9 Hornpipes: **Swalwell Lasses/South Shields Lasses**

The relaxed tempo of these pipers' tunes of 150 years ago fit the Canadian Barn Dance that Ali says is still very popular around Alnwick in Northumberland where he now lives.

10 Polka: **Moonshine Polka**

This was written down early in the morning after Johnny heard it in a dream inspired by drinking 'moonshine' liquor the previous night. This was when he was in Norway last year and had just discovered the delight of illicit drinking in an almost publess country.

11 Hornpipe/Reel: **The Quayside/Miss Ward's Reel**

Yet another hornpipe starts off this selection named after Newcastle's quayside. It also appears in *Kohler's* as *The Stockport* but the Ranters claim it as one of their own, especially as it is printed in the *Charlton* tune book. On the opposite page is the reel that matches it so well - it just had to follow it.

12 Four Bar Reels: **The Butterclout/Such a Wife As Willy Had/Willy Is A Bonny Lad**

The Ranters finish off in fine style with a collection of 'four bar' reels that remind one so much of present day Shetland music. They come from local manuscript collections, particularly that of William Vickers (1770), and go to show how popular the tunes have been since then on Tyneside and up to date in Shetland. This marks the start of a revival of interest in this sort of tune with the group, so you can expect to hear much more of this kind of music in future.

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