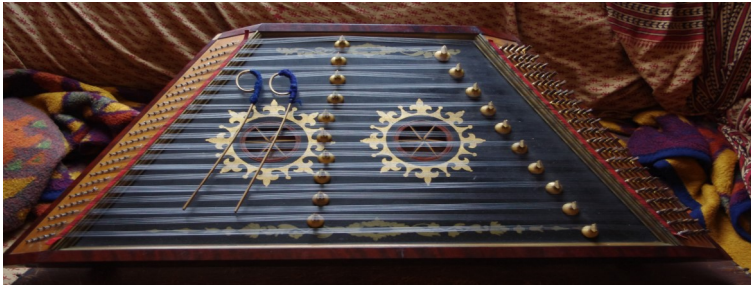


## The East Anglian Dulcimer Tradition

Despite the drop in its popularity after the piano came to power in the 18th C the dulcimer didn't die out totally in the UK. A few areas became 'strongholds' for the instrument. One of these areas was East Anglia which includes the counties of Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.



Dulcimers in East Anglia developed a distinctive styling, painted black with gold decoration, and with a small stand fixed underneath to enable them to be played while sitting at a table. They were played with cane beaters, bent and bound with wool.

There could be up to five strings per note, tuned in unison, leading to a distinctive sound. The individual wooden bridges over which the wires were strung looked so much like chess pawns that they became known as 'chessmen bridges'.

The layout of notes of the East Anglian Dulcimer is quite different to other UK traditions. It's now thought this was due to Italian instruments brought to Norfolk by immigrants in the 18thC.

### The 'Barford Angel'



Billy Bennington was a well-known dulcimer player in Norfolk.

Billy, with fellow dulcimer player, Billy Cooper, would travel to different villages, playing for village hops and other social occasions, together with the fiddler Walter Baldwin. The three of them travelled in a motorbike and sidecar, with the two dulcimers and fiddle in a basket and Billy standing up at the back hanging on for dear life!

At other times Billy would cycle with the dulcimer on his back, and with the ends of it sticking out above his shoulders, earning him the nickname of the 'Barford Angel'.

