

# Changing strings

**Ann MacCarthy in Derbyshire shares what it was like to play in a 24-hour guitar marathon in aid of the Society.**



**E**arlier this year, I joined the Wyvern Afinado Guitar Orchestra (WAGO) for a 24-hour guitar marathon. In total there were 17 of us, and we took turns sight-reading and playing music throughout the whole event.

The 'WAGOthon' took 12 months of planning, though I first heard about it last August. I live nowhere near North Somerset, where WAGO is based, but I attend a classical guitar summer school in Somerset every year.

Vince Smith, who runs WAGO, mentioned that he wanted to raise money for Alzheimer's Society, where I work. So I piped up and said I wanted to get involved!

## **Musical weekend**

The idea of a guitar marathon just grew and grew, and Vince found enough guitarists mad enough to play for 24 hours and have it live-streamed to the world.

Getting involved brought together everything I love doing. First and foremost, the event supported the

Society. But I also got to play classical guitar alongside other people and discovered new music.

We worked in three teams, taking it in turns to play for 20 minutes, with 40 minutes in between to get a snack or take a cat nap.

It was so encouraging to see supportive comments from people watching the live stream. I thought we'd get a few people logging on at the very beginning, and a few throughout the night to see if we were still going – but there were always people tuning in.

## **Friendly competition**

We also had a bit of friendly competition to see which of the three ensembles could fundraise the most. Every hour we'd update a whiteboard with our totals and members of the winning team received new guitar strings.

While this kept us going through the early hours – which were the hardest parts – it was really important to remember the reason why we were

doing it too, so we invited Society representatives along to the event.

For the last two hours we were joined by professional guitarists Craig Ogden and Francisco Correa. It was just a wonderful thing to be part of and we raised nearly £13,000.

## **Personal**

Several orchestra members have personal connections to dementia, so we're very familiar with how difficult it can be for people. My late mum had Alzheimer's and I saw how she changed as the disease progressed.

I want to do everything that I can to make that journey easier for those who've got to go through it, by supporting Alzheimer's Society to continue its research and provide support for those who need it.

**Get ideas about how you can raise funds for Alzheimer's Society – visit [alzheimers.org.uk/fundraise](https://alzheimers.org.uk/fundraise) or call 0300 222 5808.**