THE 62nd ANNUAL ALUMNI RACE. Saturday 13th December 2014.

The Annual Alumni Race requires competitors to take on a course that tests not only the legs, but more importantly the footwear that adorns the feet. This year, the weather was bright and crisp, with a sharp wind that chilled the face at the start. The line-up was on a waterlogged playing field, but no matter, as , at the wave of a walking stick, we set off into the undergrowth of Wimbledon Common, where the path became a series of boggy foot grabbers. But with tight laces on our spiked shoes, we started to climb and spread out. After traversing along the top gravel path, we dropped down into the wood again, doing double and triple skips over tree trunk obstacles, before encountering more soggy mud. The best technique seemed to be to boldly stride through this by using the deepest foot imprints, because you knew that they were probably already as deep as they were going to get. After the last climb through and around the winter foliage of Roehampton Vale, we eventually emerged onto the playing fields, for the last long flat effort to get to the finishing funnel and the welcoming applause of fellow runners and supporters. After showering in the clubhouse, trying to remove the local mud that stubbornly clung to legs, it was time for tea and cakes and chatter. This year I am pleased to say that our six man team included not only Simon Pickles (M. 1971-76) and David Thomas (Rt. 1971-75), but also the “new blood” of Rupert Lougee (SH. 1988-93), Justin Jeffrey (SH. 1985-90) and brother Nick (SH. 1988-93). This year, Simon’s son, Sam, who had previously run as a guest, was taking photographs of our efforts, along with Rupert Chance (O. 1971-76), who also came to support us, as did the Pickles & Jeffrey wives too. All these extra faces attending, make a difference to us, especially at the finish, and thanks go out to them all. The Thames Hare & Hounds Running Club had marked the course well, with many encouraging marshals along the route, making this an excellent cross country event, with varying degrees of testing difficulty, for all age groups.

The race was won by James Hoad of Winchester. Rupert Lougee was first in for The OSH at 71st . David Thomas ran in at 87th . Then Nick Jeffrey was placed at 96th , with brother Justin at 97th . Soon behind at 99th was Simon Pickles and Peter Birch was “whipper-in” at 127th . There was a total of 146 finishers, with 21 teams representing their old schools. The Open Race was won by the Sherborne team, with Shrewsbury finishing 17th . In the “Over 40” competition, we came 10th (out of 21). In the “Over 50” category, we excelled at 3rd (out of 16) and in the “Over 60” ‘s we came 6th (out of 11). Unfortunately, TH&H had some difficulty with their stopwatches, so at the time of writing this report there were no timings available, but check their website for more results later, by going to www.thameshareandhounds.org.uk and look for Alumni 2014.