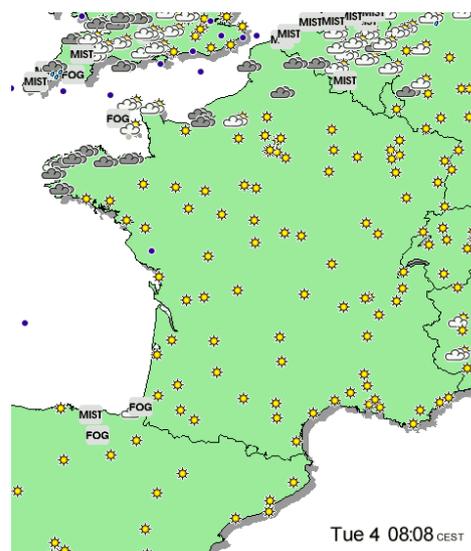
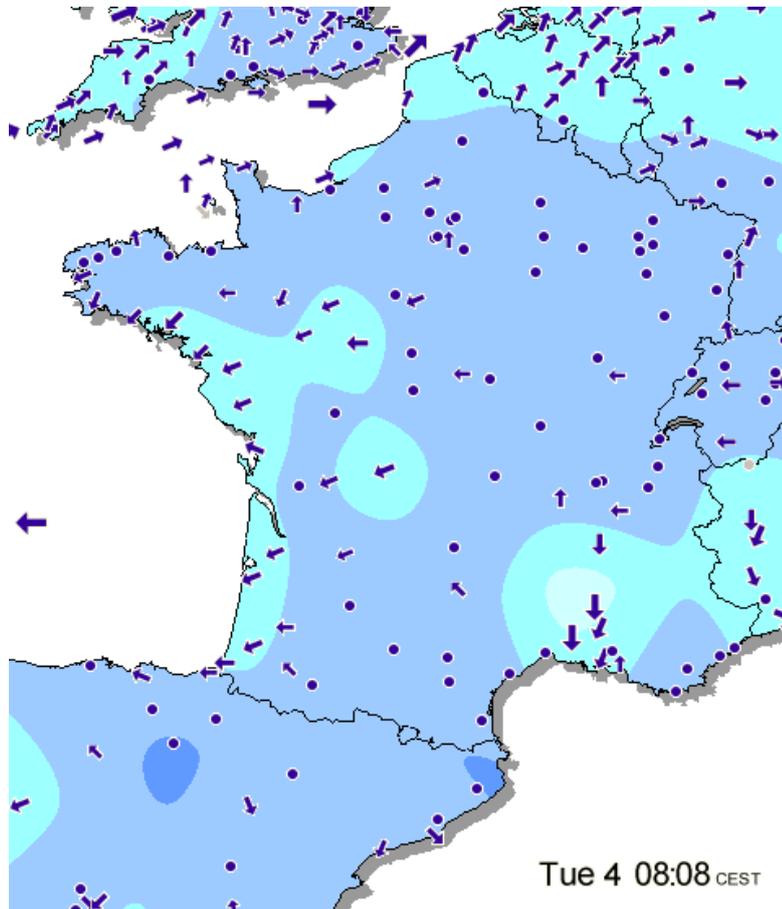




## ***BICC AGEN INTERNATIONAL RACE REPORT.***

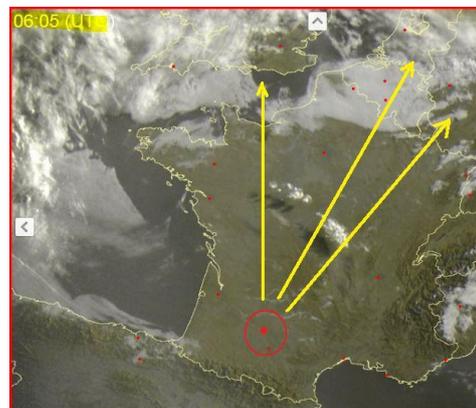
***The second International race of the 2017 BICC race programme took place from the French city of Agen, on American Independence day 4<sup>th</sup> July, at 7 am CEST or 6 am BST when 25,328 birds, including 876 pigeons entered by BICC members took to the air in South West France. The liberation was held up for four days due to bad weather in France and the Low Countries, but on the day of liberation the whole of France was bathed in cloudless blue skies and wall to wall sunshine with a light easterly breeze blowing over the first 300 miles of the course. Could there be another British International winner given the easterly influence in the wind?***





*The 2017 entry figure of 25,328 shows an increase of 5,400 + on the 2016 entry so it would seem that the interest in International racing is increasing.*

*The city of Agen lies in the southern department of Lot-et-Garonne in the Aquitaine region. The city centre lies on the east bank of the Garonne river close to the Canal de Garonne, approximately halfway between Bordeaux (132 km, 82 miles) and Toulouse (107 km, 66 miles).*



***Agen circled and the possible flightpaths of the UK and European pigeons arrowed***

*The first pigeons began to be clocked in late afternoon at 16.50 BST at Rocroi in the Ardennes region of North East France near the border with Belgium, recording a velocity of 1082 mpm. There then followed pigeons at 16.59 again on the French/ Belgium border recording 1073 mpm . However, the early leader was clocked at 17.06 pm by Phillip*

*Verspreet with a pigeon on 1093 mpm. The “cavalry charge” of pigeons into south west Belgium then started in earnest with pigeons being recorded thick and fast. However, the eventual winner of the International race was clocked once again in the Netherlands, at the Ablasserdam, South Holland loft of Dijk Gero with a pigeon doing 1169 mpm over the 904 km/540 mile course from South West France.*

*From the number of pigeons successfully making their way home into north west France, Belgium and the Netherlands it was obvious that pigeons would make the channel crossing into the British Isles on the day and so it transpired with thirteen pigeons making their home lofts in the south and west of England by nightfall.*

*The first bird to be clocked at 5.17 pm was at the Worthing, Sussex loft of **Fred Hall and daughters**, with a velocity of 1098mpm over the 462 mile course which proved to be the eventual winner of the race.*



***Fred Hall - 1st Open BICC – Agen 2017***

*Fred is a previous winner of the King’s Cup from Pau with the NFC and has an enviable record in National races. This is what Fred had to tell me about his great win from Agen which should place his pigeon in 61<sup>st</sup> Open position on the provisional result in a field of 25,328 pigeons.*

*“A few details of my winning pigeon, he is a four year old widowhood cock flown on widowhood right through the season.*



*He was just shown the bowl for half an hour before basketing for Agen. His sire is a grandson of Armstrong and George and dam is a granddaughter of As 571 the father of George. I have named the cock "Foxgrove Carteus" in remembrance of George Carteus who died last year and was a lovely man. I timed a second pigeon this morning which a full brother to the winner. All birds are fed on Vanrobaeys mixtures.” A comprehensive loft report on the Halls’ set up will appear on the BICC web site hopefully in the very near future. Congratulations Fred on a superb performance by you and your brave widower.*

*In the R/U spot in the Open result and topping the East section clocking at 6.23 pm and recording a velocity of 1065 mpm, was one to the Maidstone loft of **Mick Sheehy**. Mick clocked a 2 year old widowhood cock which had been to every race with the EECC followed by Poitiers2 with the BICC and then rested up in readiness for Agen. Sire was bred by Wignall & Barnie of Chris Gordon Snyderdale Express lines with the dam being a Busschaert via Paul Kilcoyne of Weston Super Mare.*



***Mick Sheehy 1st East Section 2nd Open BICC Agen***

*Mick raced a terrific pigeon for 30 years on the north road into London with the LNRC and since moving out of the smoke to Maidstone, has continued to do well on the south road including a win from Tours with the BICC some years ago.*

*Next, at 2<sup>nd</sup> Centre section and 3<sup>rd</sup> Open, we have one of Europe's top fanciers, none other than the "Winkfield Wizard" himself **Mark Gilbert**. Mark clocked a three year old at 6.51 pm recording a velocity of 1054 mpm over the 505 mile course. Mark's timer is a three year old widowhood cock bred in the purple as his dam is Mark's 2014 BICC Agen winner and the father is a son of Euro Diamond of Brockamp. Mark says that the cock was in excellent condition on return so well done to the International convoyers.*

*The winner in the West section and taking 4<sup>th</sup> Open on 998 mpm for the 512 mile course was a 5 year old widowhood cock racing to the Peasedown St John lofts of the multi National and International winning partnership of **Geoff and Catherine Cooper**. This one must have broken away from the main drag of International pigeons very early on, as he is way out on his own to the West of the early UK timers. Geoff and Catherine timed a five year old chequer widowhood cock, named Farmer Sparey, after Mark Sparey of Wales who fancied this*

*bird when he visited a couple of years ago. The Cooper's were waiting with friend Baz Nicol who wanted to watch the International birds home, thankfully he didn't have a wasted journey.*



***Geoff & Catherine Cooper 1st, 2nd & 3rd section [3rd Open] BICC Pau International and 1st section 4th Open BICC Agen International 2017***

*The cock was paired at the beginning of February and reared one young bird. Prior to racing he and the rest of the birds had two training tosses of 20 miles, then just loft exercise twice a day. He was going to go to Pau International but the day before basketting he was bleeding badly from a cut on the front of his neck so he was rested and sent to Agen instead. He has won many prizes including 1st Combine Bordeaux and 2nd section Poitiers National earlier this year.*

*Farmer Sparey is a grandson son of George 1st NFC Tarbes. The Dam of Farmer Sparey was bred by Clive Lister and is a grand daughter of Brockamp's George.*

*The birds looked very well on their return, the week in the baskets had not hurt them at all. The Coopers would like to congratulate Fred Hall on his National win with the BICC.*

*The loft of **Mr & Mrs Ken Hine of Hayes** in Middlesex is another top class outfit and since Ken's death has been managed by Ken's grandson Mark, ably assisted by Jeff Byles. In the Agen race they*

*clocked a three year old flying 510 miles to record a velocity of 995 mpm.*

*This is what Mark had to tell me about the race:-*

*“Our first pigeon is a 3yr old chequer cock, which this year has flown Fourgeres (NFC) and Poitiers (BICC) and a couple of inland races with the BBO Fed. He is out of on the sire’s side our Wingdown lines and on the dam’s side a hen which we purchased from Ettiene Devos. The sire of this cock flew Agen himself last year and was 16th open and now his son has got 5th open this year.*

*Our second pigeon on the day is probably our best hen in the loft and has now been put to stock. She has now achieved 10th open Agen (2014) , 56th open Agen (2015) , 22nd open Pau International (2016) and now provisionally 11th open agen (2017). Her bloodlines are on the sire’s side Biss/Fear and on the dam’s side Wingdown lines*

*All our distance team are flown on the roundabout system and are l exercised twice daily for an hour each time.”*

**David and son Daniel Watson** of Ashford in Middlesex are always there or thereabouts in BICC races and at Agen they timed yet another good ‘un to finish at 4<sup>th</sup> Centre section 6<sup>th</sup> Open velocity 981 mpm for 502 miles.



**Dave and Daniel Watson 3rd Centre section 8th Open BICC Poitiers 1 & 6th Open BICC Agen so far in 2017**

*Dave and Daniel clocked a 3yr old blue pied cock on widowhood bred down from their own family of pigeons. Dave didn’t rate the cock as one of his likely early birds so, as he said to me “On the day the pigeon was better than the fancier!!!”*

**Mr & Mrs Keith Turner & Sons** come in at 2<sup>nd</sup> East section 7<sup>th</sup> Open with a 3 year old on 958 mpm over the 528 mile course to its home loft in Farringdon.

*The Turner’s pigeon is a widowhood cock that has a string of positions to his name this year*



*flying with the EECC including 4<sup>th</sup> ,15<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> Open. His sire was a winner of 11 x 1sts for the Turners and goes back to the Red Daniel line of Van Reets.*

*Next up at 5<sup>th</sup> Centre section 8<sup>th</sup> Open is yet another dedicated “Internationalist” – **Dorin Melinte**. Dorin clocked a yearling on 955 mpm for 514 miles.*

*This is what Dorin had to tell me about his timer:- “Here is me with my 2 little princesses , Victoria-Maria feeding the birds and Little Princess as I call my little yearling hen that I clocked from Agen !*

*She's a granddaughter of my great long distance racer Junior and Spanish Princess on the sire's side. Her mother was bred for me by my good friend and God Father of Maria , Lucian Costache. Princess was sent on a 9 day old baby and as preparation she had 2 training tosses from 10 miles and 1 channel race before being fed plenty of beans and fatty seeds 5 days before the marking day !*

*Well done to Organisers for holding over and not liberating in bad weather!*

*Also very well done to the winner and to everyone clocking on the day ! See you all at Barcelona now !!!!”*



*The Oxted partnership of **R & N Steptoe** is another partnership that regularly clocks early birds in BICC races and here they timed a 4 year old on 937.6 mpm over the 488 miles to its home loft to finish at 3<sup>rd</sup> East section 9<sup>th</sup> Open. This is a four year old*



*blue pied hen of Janssen/Van Reet/ Soontjen bloodlines and is a granddaughter of their National winner. Flown on widowhood in the early part of the season when she was 16<sup>th</sup> Open NFC Messac. She was sent to Agen on a newly hatched baby.*

*Close behind the Steptoe timer on 937.4 mpm was one to **Alan Dimes** of Orpington at 4<sup>th</sup> East section 10<sup>th</sup> Open.*

*This is a real battler as Alan was telling me that he finished at 6<sup>th</sup> Open in last year's BICC Agen International as a yearling. Now as a two year old he still features in the top ten Open. Bloodlines are Louella Jan Aarden. He has had one inland race and the two Poitiers races with the BICC in preparation for Agen where he was sent sitting 14 day old eggs.*



*Around the sections now and the first three in the Centre section namely Hall, Gilbert and Hine have been covered in the top ten Open listings.*

*The East section winners were 1<sup>st</sup> Mick Sheehy on 1055 mpm taking 2<sup>nd</sup> Open followed by Mr & Mrs K Turner & Son on 958 mpm at 7<sup>th</sup> Open and finally R & N Steptoe at 3<sup>rd</sup> section 9<sup>th</sup> Open on 937.6 mpm.*

*Over in the West section the winner for the second successive race was clocked by Geoff and Catherine Cooper followed by one to the Cooper's good friend Rob Brooks of High Littleton. This one couldn't have been far away on the night as Rob clocked her at 5.03 am on the second morning.*

*Rob has gone into partnership with Stuart Wilcox this season and now competes under the banner of Brooks Brothers and Wilcox.*

*The partners follow up their win of 1<sup>st</sup> Open Pau with the GDSBNFC with a 2<sup>nd</sup> section 15<sup>th</sup> Open BICC Agen. Their timer on this occasion is a three year old blue widowhood hen which was actually bred by John and David Staddon. The hen is full of the Cooper's great Deweerdt line as she is a granddaughter of Farm Boy the Bordeaux International*



*winner for Geoff and Catherine. She was in the hard NFC race from Ancenis a month earlier and returned at 5 am on the third morning. Rested for a month, she was allowed with her mate overnight before basketting and came up trumps with another top twenty finish. Rob and Stuart clocked further pigeons to finish at 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> section 15<sup>th</sup>, 48<sup>th</sup>, 66<sup>th</sup>, 104<sup>th</sup> & 124<sup>th</sup> Open respectively.*

*Taking 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup> West section plus 19<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup> & 34<sup>th</sup> Open are three birds to the Radstock partnership of Clive and Jill Rogers and Neil Sales.*



*Their first in the clock is a blue two year old hen purchased as a young bird from Tony Cottrell of Wimborne. The hen is from Nigel Rigiani blood and in her pedigree is a full brother to Solstice Surprise and also a Chris Gordon pied hen. She was timed at 6:24 am on the second day of this race to win 3<sup>rd</sup> West Section for Treetops Loft. Clive & Jill would like to congratulate Geoff & Catherine Cooper on winning the section and of course Fred Hall & Daughters on being 1<sup>st</sup> BICC. They would also like to thank the International convoyers for looking after the pigeons so well during the long hold over period. They found that all five of their pigeons which they timed on the second day (provisional 3<sup>rd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> section) were in excellent condition upon their return despite the lengthy time in the basket. They were pleased that the race controllers had held over to wait for better weather rather than rushing the release when conditions were not really suitable. They would also like to thank Carol Francis. Her workload at this time of the year is huge, with race following upon race, week on week, meaning long hours at her computer when others can be outside enjoying the sunshine!*

*Up in the North East section the winners were Alan and Tom Wright who also won 1<sup>st</sup> Open BICC Marseille in 2016. The Wright's timer is a three year old recording 846 mpm over the 588 mile course. Bloodlines are Jos Thone x VanBruaene and the cock, a widower, was having his third Channel crossing of the year at Agen.*



*Second NE section goes to a dark pied cock racing the 555miles home at 731 mpm to the loft of Clive and Alison Sewell and Phil Masters. This one was bred from a pair of birds gifted to the partners by a good friend Tony Calver of Ipswich .The cock has been very consistent over the channel since 2014 and earlier this season he had a short channel race from Roye then kept inland with this race in mind so that the partners would have a decent team of experienced pigeons to send. He arrived on the second morning in great condition. A big thank you to Tony Calver for gifting the parents. The cock is now named Ali's Pride after Clive's.*



*Third North East section is an old mate of mine of 40+ years standing- Barry Wigg of the Wigg Brothers partnership. Barry and his late Dad purchased birds from us in the early 1970's and one of these initial purchases bred Barry's King's Cup winner from Lerwick – Mr G. This is what Barry had to tell me about his latest success:-*

*“HI Mate,  
Just a few details of my 3rd NE Sect winner from Agen. You will be pleased to know you bred the sire ( again ) being one of a nest pair you sent me being from John Wills x Pat O' Sullivan lines. The dam is from my old Westcott lines being an aunt to my 1st sect Barcelona cock.. This hen has been lightly raced up to now as is the norm for me. She flew Fonteney with the EECC then potted about doing her own thing until Agen sent sitting 10 days. As I write this she is picking about on the lawn and has had a fly this morning so soon pulled round from her effort.”*

*The North West Section winner was timed at the Kidderminster loft of Bruce Johnston doing 671 mpm for 582 miles. Bruce has enjoyed an excellent season's racing so far with the BICC and at Agen he clocked*

*a three year old blue pied cock of Jos Thone bloodlines. The cock was one of a batch of young birds bought from Mike Chadwick. Preparation this year has been a number of inland races plus both Poitiers races with the BICC . In the first of these he nighted out and in the second he returned on the day after putting in a full 12 hour shift. He was then sent to Agen feeding a 15 day old young bird and was fed unlimited amounts of Matador corn to build him up for his 582 mile slog.*



*Nigel Matthews clocked a 2 year old on 622 mpm flying 587 miles to finish at 2<sup>nd</sup> NW section. The hen was sent sitting 15 day old eggs and was prepared for Agen with plenty of club races followed by one channel race from Messac and then set up for a crack at Agen.*

*North Central section winner is one to the Hitchen loft of BICC “regular” John Black.*

*John timed a three year old on 664 mpm over 542 miles. Here’s what John had to say about his timer:-*

*“It’s me again I’m on a roll at the moment I hope it lasts !!!*

*The bird I got was a three year old red widowhood cock he was third section 58<sup>th</sup> Open last year from Agen. His dam is a red hen from Gosling & Jarvis she is the daughter of their good cock Matt that’s producing winners right up to Barcelona. Sire is a grandson of Raymond Moleveld’s “Don Leo” 1st Nat St Vincent and 1st Nat Montauban from Johnny Chipperfield.”*



*Runner Up in the NC section was one to Mr & Mrs Errington. This was a 4 year old on 613 mpm for 562 miles. Here’s what Mel Errington had to tell me:- “First we would like to congratulate the race and section winners plus the owners of the 13 days birds in the race. Our provisional second NC section was a home bred widowhood cock. The sire was 968 our good Jan Huybregts cock which won a MNFC Long Distance Ace Pigeon Award in 2014, this cock was*



*bred from birds obtained direct from Bladel, the dam was 50% Supercrack (g.sire) obtained from Axholme Lofts, 50% (g.dam) our own long distance family. Always a consistent performer, at the beginning of the season the bird was earmarked for this race, its preparation being two 100 mile inland race with our local Federation then all the BICC races, his best performance 10<sup>th</sup> section, 65<sup>th</sup> open Poitiers (2).”*

*Third North Central section goes to William Blunt’s 2 year old which flew the 546 miles to its home loft with a velocity of 383 mpm. Bill clocked a Staf van Reet bred from the stock loft that has been a consistent pigeon for him winning various minor club cards from both inland and across the channel. The cock was paired up after being on roundabout at the start of the season in preparation for Agen.*

*This was Bill’s first attempt at International racing and as he said to me “I have really enjoyed it and looking forward to next year when I will hope to compete again”*



*Just before I close this report I would like to include some details of the Kingsmead School project.*

*Some of the pupils have been encouraged to start a loft of racing pigeons and have kindly sent me some photos of the pupils along with details of their timers in the Agen International race with the BICC and the Tarbes Grand National with the NFC.*

*The photograph on the right show Charlotte Leedham-Hawkes, Bobby Pinches and Callum Worrall holding provisional 7th NC Section 141<sup>st</sup> Open BICC Agen 600 miles and Provisional 13th I Section National Flying Club Tarbes 661 miles both timed in this week from the respective races. All 3 students have their own pigeons at home.*



*Below I reproduce some further details about the ongoing project kindly sent to me by one of the tutors at Kingsmead.*

*At 8:37am On Thursday 6th June Kingsmead School clocked in from the Agen National / International race. The pigeon timed in was a gift bird from local fanciers Paul Sims and George Fowell. She was raced by the partnership as a young bird and the pupils at Kingsmead managed to break the pigeon in to the school loft. As a Yearling Kingsmead sent her to the MNFC Bordeaux 553 miles timing her in to come 19th SW section 83rd open this being only her 2nd ever race over the water, her first attempt being as a Young Bird.*

*This season, in January, it was decided that she would be prepared especially for the Agen race. She was sent in preparation to the National Flying Club Messac National that turned out to be a very hard race. However, she returned one week after and she was in great condition. The students then paired her up and raced her on the natural system, she was sitting 14 day old eggs on the day of basking and returned on Thursday morning, over a week later, to continue to sit and be reunited with her Cock who returned from the National Flying Club Tarbes race on Tuesday. The cock was also a pigeon that was broken in from Paul and George. This pair have been paired together all season and 2 of their Young Birds have been sent to the South Africa Million Dollar Pigeon Race for the 2018 race, so fingers crossed they can perform on the same level as their parents. Well done all at Kingsmead School.*

*Finally, some news regarding young Harvey Watson of Penzance, the ten year old who the BICC members have so generously taken under their wing.*

*Harvey's uncle Trevor sends this progress report on Harvey:-*

*"As the members of the BICC have been so generous in their support of Harvey I like to keep you up to date with Harvey's progress.*

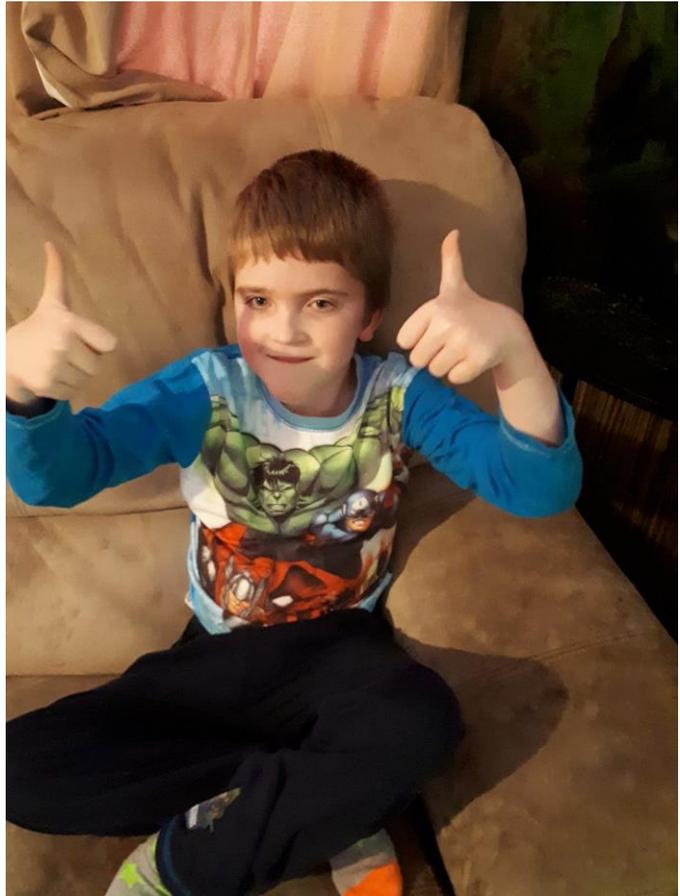
*He is walking quite well with support , but less support than before his operation, so this is a bonus ,*

*Getting some feeling back in other parts of his body , sleeps through the night most of the time He is improving a lot at*

*School and is now pain free but here is still a long way to go, However, he is coping well with his Physio and Hydrotherapy , so at the moment looking good ,*

*Regards , Trevor".*

*Good news Trevor, please keep sending the progress reports on Harvey.*



*Gareth Watkins*