

# New Zealand-made


Words by **Rebecca Hayter**

When the 52-footer *Beau Geste* sailed from New Zealand to beat the Australians on their home waters at Audi Hamilton Island Race Week 2015, the victory was as sweet as pavlova.

Hong Kong businessman Karl Kwok was defending his title; last year he won for his home country, but this year he sailed under the burgee of the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron. It was his 'thank you' to the New Zealand marine industry for building him many successful racing yachts – all of them called *Beau Geste*. It means: gracious gesture.

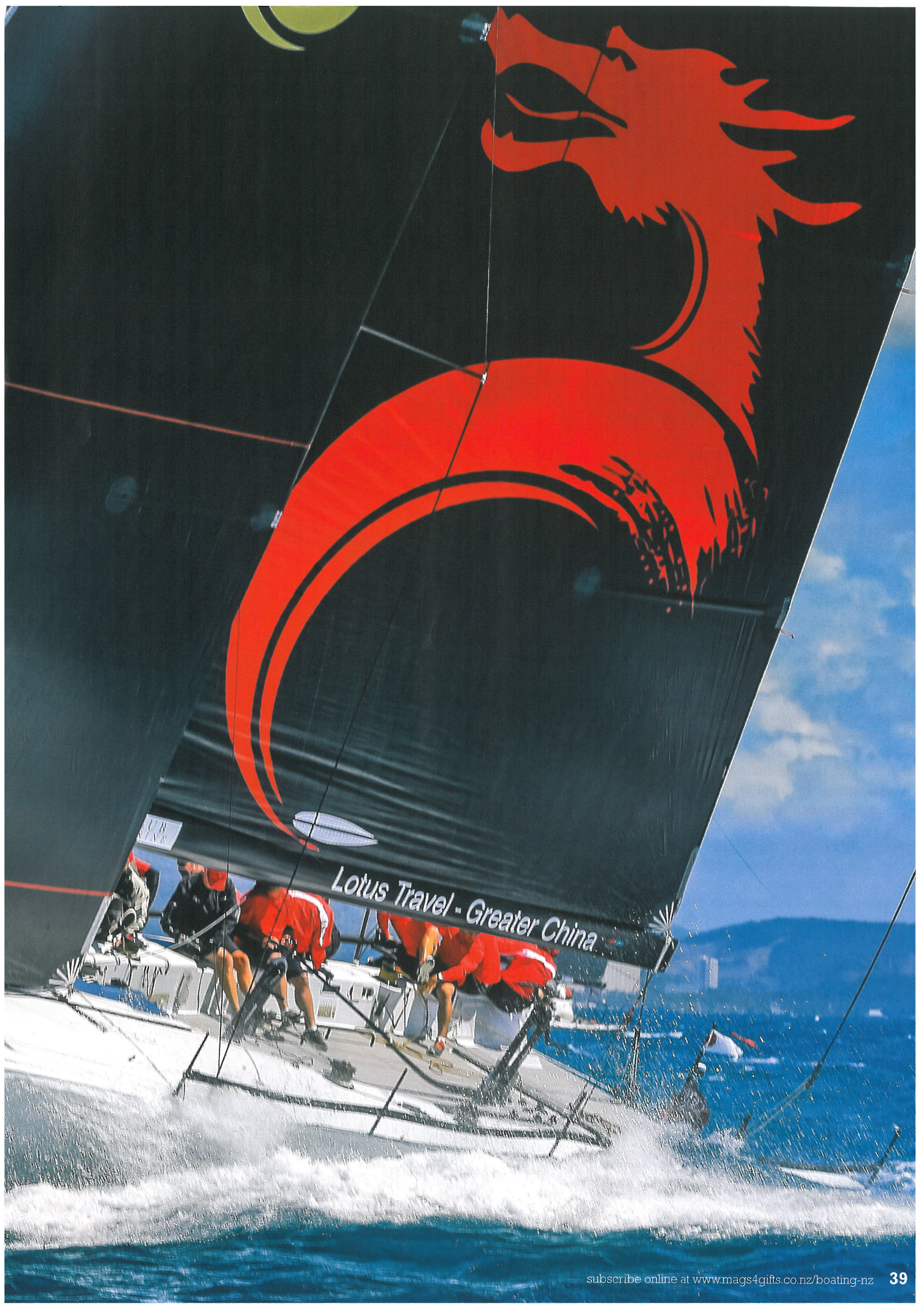
Over 20 years, Karl Kwok and his Kiwi sailing master Gavin Brady, 41, have done nearly every blue water classic on *Beau Geste* yachts – the Sydney Hobart, the Fastnet, the Middlesea Race, Transpacs, Auckland to Fiji and Noumea. Only the Capetown to Rio is missing.

Since 1997, the year in which Hong Kong regained independence from Britain, all six *Beau Gestes* have carried the sail number 1997; all have been built in New Zealand: four at Cookson Boats in Auckland, one at Southern Ocean Marine in Tauranga and one at Hakes Marine in Wellington. The two latter businesses are no longer operating.



The new TP52 *Beau Geste*,  
built at Cookson Boats, NZ.  
Photo: Craig Greenhill/  
Saltwater Images.





Lotus Travel - Greater China



## “It’s something that is quite dysfunctional in our sport.”

The newest *Beau Geste* is the fourth TP52 by that name – and the second of a new breed of 52s. It sails just to windward of the TP52 Rule, introduced as a box rule 10 years ago for the Transpac Race from Los Angeles to Hawaii. The rule adapted well to produce boats competing for line honours in coastal and offshore races worldwide and has become a highly successful class, well represented in New Zealand.

Part of its success has been its ability to evolve and in the last year, nine new TP52s have appeared on the circuit, designed by Botin or Judel Vrolick.

The first new generation hull shape was *Sled*, designed by Botin and built at Cookson Boats in Auckland and now racing the 52 Super Series in Europe. This *Beau Geste* is the second. She is not restricted by the TP52 rule and is turbo'd with a mast 600mm taller, bigger sails and a deeper keel. She has a slightly higher rating under IRC and ORC than the previous *Beau Geste*.

“Mostly we’ve got five per cent more power for the same weight,” Brady says. “We’re a little more set up for coastal racing where our winches can turn with the pedestals so we can change sails and do a peel whereas some boats are one-trick ponies.

“We’ve turned it into an IRC multi-purpose boat that you could go and do the Sydney Hobart, Bay of Islands Sailing Week or any type of racing.”

The construction is slightly more conservative with foam core to give the boat a longer life – specifically, to handle the slamming that can occur when the boats are returning home on delivery after a race, upwind and sailing or motoring in flat trim.

Also in build at Cookson Boats is the TP52 *Fox*, for American Victor Wild who wanted a new boat to stay ahead of the hounds. According to Brady, Wild chose Cookson Boats on the recommendation of his friend whose 100-footer, *Rio*, had been modified there.

“He’s excited that his race boat is being built in the same yard as the America’s Cup boat for Team New Zealand,” Brady says. “And that’s the reason why owners want their boat built in New Zealand.

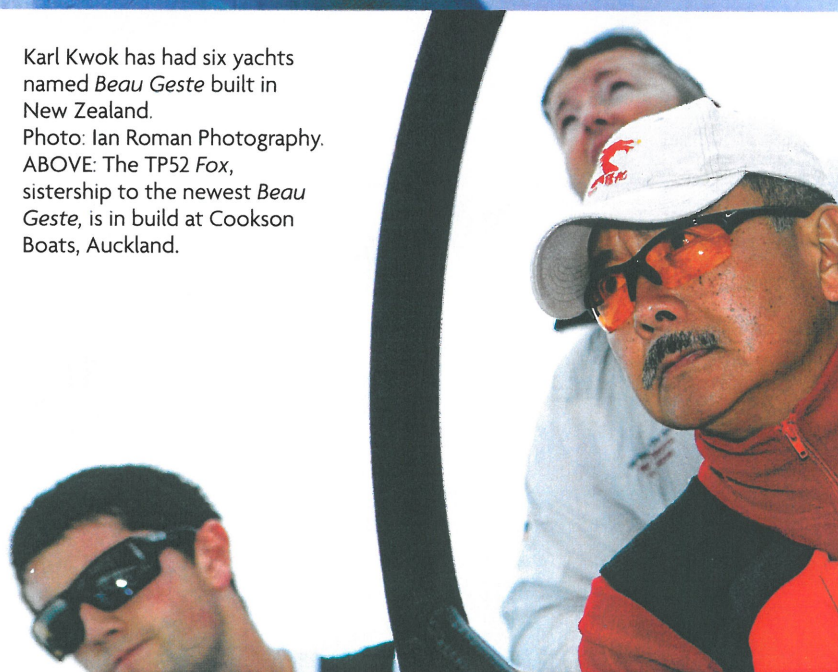
“It might be that Southern Spars are building a mast for a cruising boat and the owner’s sitting in a bar at Milan saying, ‘All my masts are being built where the America’s Cup teams got their wing sails made.’

“People like Karl Kwok build their boats in New Zealand because they trust the New Zealand industry.

“Everyone wants the Kiwi experience,” Brady says. “It’s the people on the floor. The young guy



Karl Kwok has had six yachts named *Beau Geste* built in New Zealand.  
Photo: Ian Roman Photography.  
ABOVE: The TP52 *Fox*, sistership to the newest *Beau Geste*, is in build at Cookson Boats, Auckland.







Gavin Brady: "I've seen that movie too many times."  
 Photo: Brendon O'Hagan/Getty Images.

putting the laminate on the chain plate. He's in the [Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron] youth programme. He understands what he's doing. Whereas you go and get a boat built in some other countries – who's putting that laminate on your chain plates?"

*Beau Geste* is well spec'd with New Zealand-supplied products, sporting sails from Doyle and Norths sails – like carbon fibre diplomacy – and Harken NZ deck gear.

Fineline cordage trims her sails, and Gurit supplied the high-tech building materials. Brady gives the company credit for holding the highly specified foams and resins in stock so the boat builders can start work as soon as they receive a contract to build, rather than waiting several months or paying air freight to get the materials into the country.

"So Cooksons puts in an order and they have everything they need to build a TP52 on the North Shore. This is massive," he says.

The finishing touch on the Kiwi package is the painter, Mike Vitali of One-Ten. "He's fantastic, the best boat painter in the world."

When *Beau Geste* is racing, Brady is either the helmsman or the tactician. He helmed for *Beau Geste's* victory at Audi Hamilton Island Race Week after Dean Barker stepped down to join the Japanese America's Cup syndicate.

A bonus for Brady? Not especially.

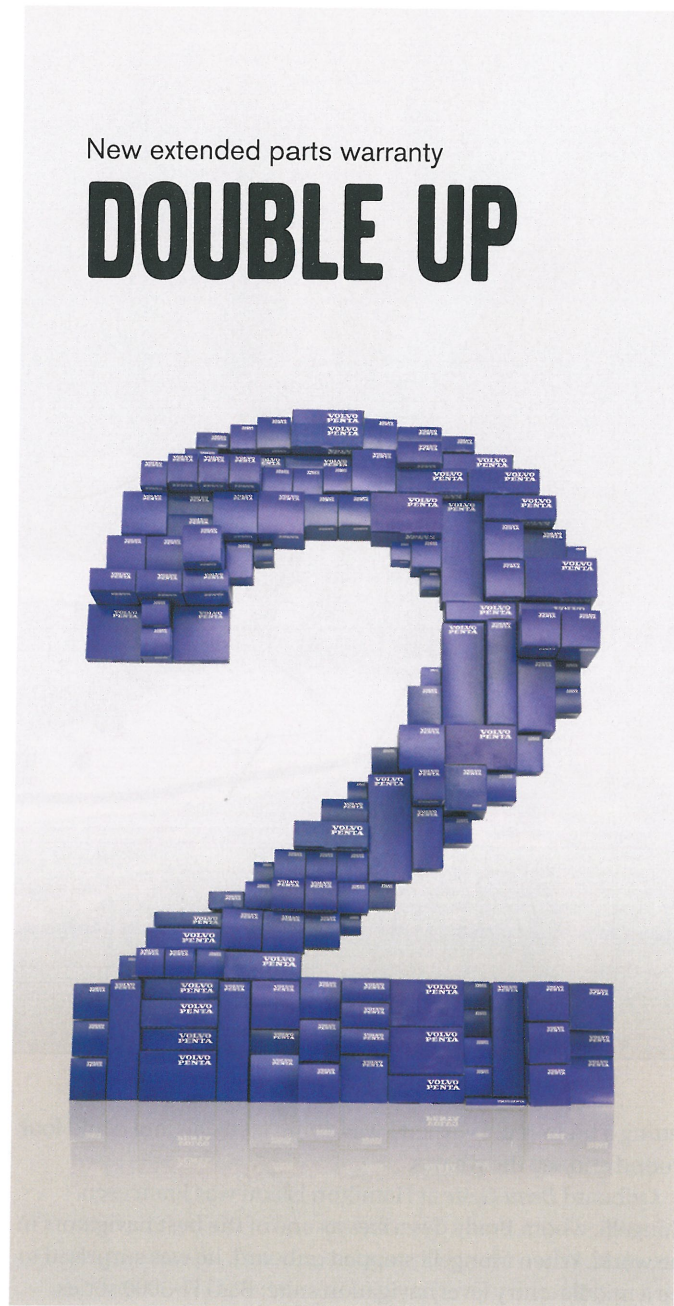
"The helmsman's role on a TP52 has become quite different," he says. "The boats are such high performance. It used to be the helmsman was also the strategist but now if you say anything as a helmsman the whole crew bark at you to be quiet."

The foils are getting smaller but the boats are going quicker through the water so the foils are generating the same amount of lift. "On the old boats, all the time you had to be in the perfect mode, whereas this boat if you're a bit low you still go fast. Your VMG [velocity made good] curve is big.

"They're actually easy to drive now. Sometimes at Hamo, I was

New extended parts warranty

# DOUBLE UP



Your peace of mind is important. So when you purchase Genuine Volvo Penta Parts and have them installed by a Volvo Penta dealer, we'll double our standard warranty to two full years.

Not only will you benefit from knowing that high-quality genuine parts have been fitted correctly with Volvo Penta expertise, you can also rest assured that Volvo Penta has you covered – for double the time.

Just ask your dealer!

## SAME WARRANTY – TWICE AS LONG

New Zealand and Pacific Islands -  
**Volpower NZ Limited**  
 ph 0800 865 769 or +649 2744305  
[www.volpower.co.nz](http://www.volpower.co.nz)

**VOLVO  
 PENTA**

6491119AV





*Beau Geste* sailed for New Zealand when she won at 2015 Audi Hamilton Island Race Week. Photo: Andrea Francolini.

getting a bit bored. I wished I was doing tactician and could look around and see the whales.”

Onboard *Beau Geste* at Hamilton Island was Francesco Mongelli, whom Brady describes as one of the best navigators in the world. When Mongelli stepped onboard, he was surprised to see a middle-entry level navigation suite: B&G H-5000 series.

Brady loves it, but Mongelli was not so sure. “He’s like: ‘You’ve got what?’” says Brady. “By the end of the regatta, he was sold on it.

“Most people think we have the latest works-burger system but we actually wanted something that was simple and reliable, so anyone can step onboard and use it, and it’s easy to repair if necessary. It needs to be simple.”

Boats are getting deeper and faster, but there are more things in the ocean to hit, he says. “Sometimes on a boat, the navigator will go: ‘You’ve got another two boat lengths,’ and I just tack. It’s just not worth the risk. Because I’ve seen that movie too many times.”

A few years ago, Brady nearly starred in that movie.

He was helming the 80ft *Beau Geste*, doing 20 knots downwind, when the navigator announced a rock a mile ahead.

“It was pitch black, and we’d just hoisted the spinnaker and everyone was working. In the distance I could see white.” The navigator was looking at the deck screen which took his night vision. He told Brady: “You shouldn’t be able to see it from here.”

“I went, ‘Oh shit,’ and sure enough it was ten boat lengths in front of us. I crash-gybed the boat.”

Chaos: the spinnaker inside the forestay, the boat on her side, everyone wondering what the hell the helmsman was doing – except the rock. It was two boat lengths to leeward.

“It was a big education for me in electronics; the amount we push things now because we’ve got all the technology. One bit of moisture in a cable in the bilges and if that’s inaccurate, you run a boat aground, yet crews rely on it.

“It’s something that is quite dysfunctional in our sport.”

*Beau Geste* sails with between 10 and 14 crew, usually including around six Kiwis but it changes with the location and time of year. Does it rock the boat to change crew?

“Chris Dickson taught me this: if you change one person in a team, you don’t notice the difference. Change two, it’s a whole new team – and he’s bang on.”

Brady sailed with Dickson for Oracle syndicate in the America’s Cup 2007. The crew were rotated frequently to avoid the disappointment of an A team and B team, but breakages were rife. “The boatbuilders would say, ‘Guys, how did you break the spinnaker pole? And we’d say, ‘Oh there was confusion over the systems onboard.’

“The boatbuilders were working all night – so the new policy was: one change a day, no more – and it worked.

“We do the same on *Beau Geste*. If we have more than one crew change, I’ll suggest to Karl that we need to do three days of training. If we have the same crew we can prepare with one day of training.”

As *Boating* goes to print, *Beau Geste* is due back in New Zealand mid-September and will compete in the Bay of Islands Sailing Week next January. Brady is hoping to see a strong fleet of TP52s here, including *Fox*; the Auckland fleet and perhaps some TP52s from across the Tasman – another chance to show the Aussies how it’s done. ☐