

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

Forrest Medal - Edinburgh 2016

Pleione Britannia 'Doreen'

Shown by Jane & Alan Thomson



THE THOMSONS' BRITANNIA RULES

Jane and Alan have supported the SRGC Edinburgh show for as long as I can remember. Their exhibits are always well grown, well prepared and desirable. They have an eye for a good plant. This year their magnificent pan of Pleione Britannia 'Doreen' was judged Best in Show and no wonder! Their pan was filled with wonderful orchids. With their regal purple wings and royal red blotches inside the frilled white tubes, these were Orchids fit for the Queen. Jane told me that they have grown their panful since it was a single pseudobulb bought from Pleione supremo Ian Butterfield when he lectured at an SRGC Discussion Weekend and show at the then Queen Margaret College in Edinburgh. The increase shows their skill as cultivators. As well as the Forrest medal there

were further honours. The Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee was meeting at this show. The Committee recommended that Pleione Britannia 'Doreen' be awarded a First class Certificate as a plant for exhibition. Jane and Alan were awarded an RHS Certificate of Cultural Commendation. High praise indeed!

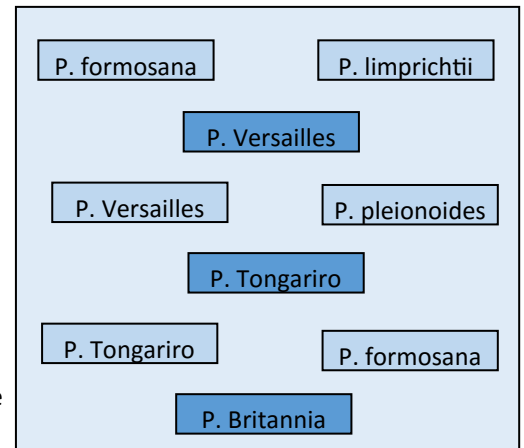
A BIT OF FRANCO ANGLLO TRIUMPHAL ONE-UP-MANSHIP? By far, the majority of Pleiones in cultivation these days are hybrids. Many having been raised by Ian Butterfield. The ancestry of Doreen exemplifies their complex parentage. The first ever man made Pleione hybrid was made by Frenchman Georges Morel in 1966 who crossed *P. formosana* with *P. limprichtii*, the resulting hybrid he named 'Versailles'. In 1981 Ian B. crossed *P. Versailles* with *P. pleionoides* and named the hybrid 'Tongariro'. In 1992, Stephen James crossed *P. formosana* and *P. Tongariro* and named this hybrid 'Britannia'. Each of these hybrids [Tongariro and Versailles] is a 'GREX'. The hybrid [GREX] names cover all crosses between the same two parents, so that there will be many slightly different pleiones with



the same grex name. Any single plant which deserves to be propagated and increased because it is specially meritorious is then given a clonal name, in this case 'Doreen'. There may be several selections under each Grex name but every plant with the clonal name will be identical. Ian Butterfield had a great idea. He started to name his crosses [grex] after volcanoes and the selection [clone] after birds. There are now 362 registered Pleione hybrids, more than one for every day in the year. If you then add in all the named selections the number multiplies incredibly. The trouble in choosing which to grow is that they are all beautiful.

When describing natural Pleione hybrids the convention is to write an "x" before the hybrid name and start the name with a lower case letter e.g. P x confusa.

Man-made hybrids have no "x" and start with a capital letter eg P. Versailles. Pleione Britannia 'Doreen' therefore contains the P. formosana, P. limprichtii and P. pleionoides in its ancestry.





Since Dundee is the city of Discovery, by the same reasoning Edinburgh is the City of Britannia. How appropriate then is was that Britannia 'Doreen' won in Edinburgh? Bells should ring out from Leith to Fairmilehead. As you see the Royal Yacht Britannia is decked out with its flags to celebrate. The reason I wrote about the plant's ancestry is that the French breeder Georges named his first hybrid after France's most famous palace [Versailles]. When Ian Butterfield named his hybrid he used the name of a volcano [Tongariro] but Stephen went for broke and chose Britannia. In the early days of hybrids this must have been seen triumphal.

In our case the triumph is all Jane's and Alan's for maintaining their Doreen in good health for all these years, despite many Pleione enthusiast suffering the scourge of the Brevipalpus mite.

I well remember the wonderful displays of Pleiones which Ian Butterfield used to stage. At Chelsea and at Scotland's National Gardening Show. His dedication to the genus is legendary and the hybrids and selections he made and chose are testament to his skill. When not growing Pleiones he was photographing them with his stereoscopic camera. When viewed through accompanying viewer the flowers jumped out at you. What a wonderful invention. The trouble was that you had two slides of each plant as you only got 18 on a roll of Kodachrome_

Once again, Well done Jane and Alan on your first Forrest Medal!

Below, HM Yacht Britannia, Versailles, Mount Tongariro, on New Zealand's North Island

