

# Scary Donovan gives Japs the jitters

Canadian Donovan King broke off his tour of the world last summer to spend some time scaring visitors to the London Dungeon.

The 23-year-old graduate from Montreal's Concordia University turned out to be so good at

it... he is now official coach for the Dungeon's 15-strong cast of macabre characters.

In the grim garb of an ancient mortician, Donovan christened himself Dr Maggot... and has been putting the wind up the tourists ever since! He literally walked into the Dungeon off the street and charmed general manager Linda Boyd into offering him a short-term post.

But Donovan found the Dungeon's dark archways and grisly tableaux provided a perfect stage for his dramatic talents... and he soon had visitors of all nationalities either jumping out of their skins, or joining in a spot of impromptu horror-story role play.

"I'm enjoying myself so much I've decided to see out a full year at the Dungeon," said Donovan. "Hopefully that will also give me chance to get around all the sights."

In stark contrast to his Dungeon character... the real Donovan King likes nothing better than a spot of gardening in his spare time... and he has surrounded himself with pot plants in his flat at Acton Town. He has also found a Saturday assignment teaching serious drama to students at the Stagecoach Theatre Arts school in Croydon.



Dungeon character Donovan King

But it is the famous Dungeon which is keeping him in London... after whistlestop tours of France, Spain, Portugal and Ireland... and he has learned some fascinating things about the relative fright capacities of different nationalities and

different age groups!

"The Japanese are easiest to put the wind up," says Donovan. "They're nothing remotely like the Dungeon in Japan. The whole concept is totally alien to Japanese culture." Possibly with Donovan's inevitable departure in

mind, Vardon is spending £100,000 upping the 'fear factor' in the centrepiece Jack The Ripper exhibition... that's £1 for every person the exhibition has added to the Dungeon's annual visitor total since it opened in 1993.

## Survey's grim news for Tories

The value of effective market research was detailed at a special marketing conference early in February for the Attractions division's southern managers and their press and publicity officers.

As part of their entertaining presentation Lloyd Brna and Feisal Khalif instigated an on-the-spot survey of all those present, with the following intriguing results!

It transpired that most of the delegates...

...would live with a partner prior to marriage, believe they have real responsibility in their jobs, do not support the notion of a single European currency, and would vote Labour!

Labour would win a Vardon Attractions election with 50% of votes, followed by the Conservatives on 23% and the LibDems with 14%.

The remaining 14% were apparently undecided.



Gillian Hallard, pictured holding one of the residents of Nimble Quest

# Seahorse babies hit the headlines

Weymouth Sea Life Park celebrated the birth of dozens of baby seahorses early in February.

They were the offspring of seahorses which had arrived in the Park last summer... heralding the return of the species to British waters after an absence of around a century.

Members of the species Hippocampus Ramulosus

they are a particularly attractive seahorse... characterised by branch-like spikes which cover their bodies.

Weymouth had passed on one pair to a seahorse aquarium in Exeter, and they also produced offspring at roughly the same time.

Should any of the youngsters survive from either brood, they

will be the world's first successfully reared offspring from this species. The births attracted media interest from The Times, Telegraph, Sky News and many others.

For more information on the Weymouth Sea Life Park visit our website at [www.wslp.co.uk](http://www.wslp.co.uk)

## Tasty new job for Gillian

The Attractions divisions new Group Sales Controller Mark Fisher wasted no time appointing an ambassador for the South East region.

And 26-year-old Gillian Hallard, of Petts Wood, Kent, has already lined up a number of 'corporate' group deals with the likes of Nestle, GBC, the Metropolitan Police and the Home Office, to name just a few.

A business studies and marketing graduate from Coventry University, Gillian's first job was selling refrigerated bodywork to anyone who needed to transport something 'chilled'.

As well as frozen food, that can also apparently mean clinical waste, pharmaceutical products

and even musical instruments!

The Royal Philharmonic used the services of Gillian's employer GRP Massey to keep their instruments stored at the right temperatures as they were moved around Europe while the Orchestra was on tour.

After two-and-a-half years Gillian switched to become marketing manager of a London-based gourmet food company, but is now delighted to be working for Vardon.

Her role as regional sales manager also involves helping to generate schools business, coach and tour party business and other group business in general.

Outside work, Gillian enjoys squash, go-karting and the gentler art of candle-making.

## Ex-Yardley man is Vardon's new face of finance

Steven Palmer has joined Vardon PLC to take over from Peter Taylor as Company Secretary.

Steven is originally from Wilmslow, Cheshire, and was educated at Kings School, Macclesfield.

He went on to gain a first class honours degree in economics from Swansea University.

After qualifying as a chartered accountant in 1984 with Deloitte Haskins and Sells in Southampton, he left to join a small company Leading Leisure as their Group Financial Controller and Company Secretary.

Leading Leisure went on to become one of the largest leisure companies in the South of England, and used to own several of Vardon's bingo clubs.

Steven moved to perfume company Yardley in 1992, as Company Secretary, and was responsible for signing up actress Helena Bonham Carter as the 'Face of Yardley'. He was also general trouble shooter and problem solver in Europe and South America. Counterfeit goods were one major problem, and on one occasion Steven managed to get a quantity of fake Yardley products impounded at Barry Decks.

In 1994 he joined Scott's Hotels as Finance Director. Scott's operated 16 UK hotels and owned the UK franchise for Marriott.

Not long after implementing a strategic review which substantially improved the company's profitability, it was then sold to Whitbread.

Steven, a keen skier and sailor, is happy to be back with a pure leisure company.

He and his wife now live in a small village near Woking.

