

Reaching our destination,



we are warmly welcomed by the owners, Marcus and his wife along with some of their staff

.....and shown to our reserved tables.



Strategically we have to pass the pastry counter slowwwwwly and with much finger-pointing, mainly by ladies but including Thomas Krapper, a new member who has a typical continental 'sweet tooth'



until we are seated and menus distributed. Many of us go straight to the 'sweet' section. This has a nice selection including custard slices, toasted teacake, scones and cream, fudge cake, fresh cream

cakes as well as the desserts for the day that we saw on the way in; and of course a variety of ice creams; so delicious, so early in the day; so many to choose from! Go on, give in! And so teas, coffee and surprise, surprise cakes are ordered.



Thomas however is still feeling peckish and joined by one or two others, he goes for the full Welsh breakfast.

Whilst I order three custard slices. No, I am not that greedy, there is one for Alison!

If she's quick.



When everyone has nearly finished their coffees I ask Marcus if he wouldn't mind telling us a little

about the Kardomah.



"Always ready to oblige, Mario he replies. Kardomah Cafés were a chain of in England, Wales, and a few in Paris; popular from the early 1900s until the 1960s. They featured live entertainment provided by string quartets and the staff always wore traditional uniforms. I believe that there were two in Cardiff at one time, Queen Street and Bute Street.

The Swansea Kardomah opened in Castle Street, originally the site of the Congregational church where Dylan Thomas's parents married in 1903. The 'Kardomah Gang' of whom Dylan was a member, was a group of bohemian friends – artists, musicians, poets and writers – who, in the 1930s, frequented the cafe. However, in February 1941, Swansea was heavily bombed by the Luftwaffe in a 'Three Nights Blitz'. Castle Street was just one of the many streets in Swansea that suffered badly; the rows of shops, including the 'Kardomah Cafe, were destroyed. After the bombing, Dylan Thomas later wrote about the devastation in his radio play entitled *Return Journey to Swansea*. In the play, he describes the café as being 'Razed to the snow'.

"They blitzed our Swansea shop" mentions Alison

"Now as far as I know this is the last Kardomah still trading, but there is a Kardomah Brand of coffee for sale, on the internet I believe. I have produced our own

brand of coffee, perhaps you noticed it when you came in"?

"I always stock up when I come here" I said, producing the two bags of decaffeinated medium roast I bought on the way in.

Marcus continued "The nostalgic pictures, patterned tables and mirrored walls are I believe, all part of what makes the cafe so unique and well-

loved. That hasn't always been the case though, with diners at one point classing it as 'old fashioned. I made a conscious decision not to change the decor and now in recent years it has come full circle with its retro vibes regaining popularity among customers. It's unique now and we have had Doctor Who filming here, also a film about Dylan Thomas and more recently Netflix all because The Kardomah has this 50s decor and there are not many places like it any more". "Have a look at this photo panel commemorating the Doctor Who filming here".





The Karmah in its new incarnation on Portland Street was a haunt well known to Doctor Who writer Russell T Davies during his teenage years growing up in Swansea. In 2009, one of the key scenes in his scripts for the tenth Doctor's final story - The End Of Time - was filmed here.



"Thank you Marcus for a most interesting talk"

Well, all good things come to an end, and so polishing off that last crumb of cake it is time to leave The Kardomah, not forgetting to pay our individual bill on the way out please!

On our way to the bus station we take the opportunity to walk through Swansea's famous indoor market.



"Now if you fancy any of the fresh fish on offer, please do everyone a favour and purchase it on our way back please."

"What a good idea" intones Peter.



And so back to the bus station, no Belly Dancers this time as we pass through the Centre. Shame!

