

Having spent time away this summer, I returned to take a fresh look at Knutsford. Our town, perhaps more than most, is in a constant state of flux. You go away for a week and come back to find an old favourite has shut up shop. Two doors down someone new is setting up. This rapid turnover is perhaps because the survival of many of our retailers depends on visitors – and they're an unpredictable lot.

However this can't be said of Panache, the hairdressers on bottom street, who disappeared after 32 years leaving such a sad little farewell note in the window I almost shed a tear. At the other end of the scale Mallard Tea Shop didn't last a year. Nice tea, wrong location? Having Costa Coffee next door can't have helped.

Thankfully Knutsford caters well for our daily needs with the likes of **Woods** and **The Easy Fish Co.** Then there are those that tempt you to browse – the new **Hidden Jem** is a treat and **The Summer House, Chalk, House and Cherry Tree Gallery** need constant checks for the loveliest gifts.

Indeed the majority of our shopkeepers seem to have weathered the recession and are in positive mood. **Mode-Elle** on Minshull Street was on the brink of closing, sending a shudder of fear through women within a 30 mile radius. But I was glad to hear they have re-signed their lease and we can all breathe a well-measured sigh of relief.

Similarly, **Halstone phone shop** on Princess Street disappeared for 6 months but has now reappeared brighter and better. And Zizzi, the pizza restaurant on King Street has been given a new lease of life and relaunched as **Primavera** – an independent venture brimming with fresh ideas and even fresher pasta. It's all about the survival of the fittest in this game.

Like any living thing, Knutsford evolves, shedding the old to make way for the new. As we gear up for the festive season we welcome three newcomers: **Glamorous** – a foray on King Street by two local Mums into the vicarious world of fashion. They have chosen to target the younger (and skimpier) end of the market and I hope this proves to be wise. On Princess Street we have **Vermilion - a new Art Gallery** – another notoriously tough market.

