

Students hit in crime surge

■ 240 victims a WEEK since start of the year

GIRISH GUPTA

MORE than 2,000 crimes were committed against students in Greater Manchester in just two months. Offences included grievous bodily harm, harassment, robbery and burglary – but only 169

people were charged and 35 people cautioned in relation to the incidents.

The figures cover January 1 to March 6 – when an average of more than 240 a week were victims of crime – and have led to claims police are not doing enough to tackle offences against students.

More than 90,000 students attend universities in Greater Manchester each year.

One second year Manchester University student who was mugged said his housemate was burgled by the same man, and although one of them was able to identify the offender in an ID parade he was not charged and walked free.

But senior officers insist huge resources are ploughed into tackling student crime.

Supt John Graves said: "Every year, GMP invests huge amounts

of time and expertise into analysis regarding crimes that are committed against students who come to live and study in the area. Without question, our priority is to make Manchester a safer place.

"We have dedicated analysts who produce regular breakdowns of crimes that have been committed and this in-

formation, along with intelligence gathered by our neighbourhood policing teams, informs our operational and patrol plans."

Supt Graves said the force has specialist teams who advise students so they can also help protect themselves.

He said: "Our on-campus

teams are there to solely look after the concerns of our university students.

"Numerous operations that are purely concerned with tackling student crime have been running throughout the year."

He said recent operations covering student areas included a crackdown on burglary around Wilmslow Road and increasing the number officers on patrol in the early hours in Fallowfield.

'Teams are there solely to look after students'



▶▶ **BELLES OF THE BALL** Coronation Street's Michelle Keegan and Kym Marsh at the British Soap Awards

Soap dish Michelle is saviour of the Street

CORONATION Street's Michelle Keegan, who plays Tina McIntyre, was voted sexiest female at the British Soap Awards – on an otherwise bad night for the Granada show.

BBC rival EastEnders swept the board with 10 awards – including Best British Soap – at the event, which was presented by chat show host Paul O'Grady.

Coronation Street, which celebrated its 50th anniversary this year, won just two other awards.

TRIBUTES

Street star Maggie Jones, who died last year aged 75



Best Comedy Performance went to Craig Gazey, who plays Graeme Proctor, and 89-year-old Betty Driver, who plays barmaid Betty Williams was presented with the Lifetime Achievement award.

Tribute was also paid to Coronation Street star Maggie Jones, who died last December aged 75.

Following a moving montage of her scenes – she had played battleaxe Blanche Hunt since 1974 – the audience gave a standing ovation, with many of the Coronation Street cast wiping away tears.

Betty's hotpot is not off just yet ...

CORRIE chiefs have denied reports that Street legend Betty Driver is ready to quit the soap after an incredible 41 years.

It follows suggestions that the Rovers Return's queen of the hotpot, pictured, is ready to hang up her apron.



The star, who plays barmaid Betty Williams, is Coronation Street's oldest cast member and will celebrate her 90th birthday on May 20.

But a spokesman for the show denied she is preparing to walk out on Weatherfield.

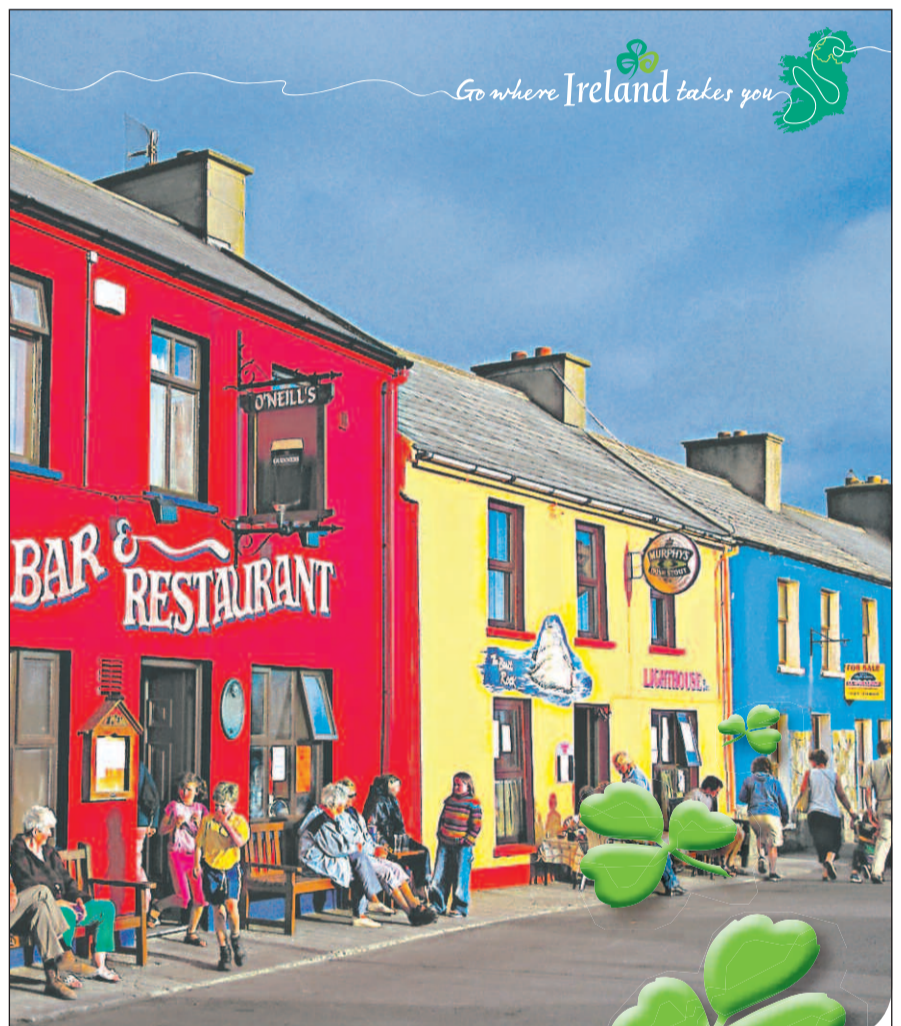
He said: "It's pure speculation. Betty continues to be a much-loved actress and much-loved

character. We fully intend her to be part of this year's 50th anniversary celebrations."

Actress Betty, who lives in Altrincham, joined the soap as school dinner lady Betty Turpin in 1969 after originally auditioning for the role of Hilda Ogden.

The M.E.N. told on April 28 how Betty was recovering in hospital from a chest infection.

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