



Mike Dwane reports from Shannon

Airbus's A380 touches down on the runway

THE world's largest passenger jet, the Airbus A380, eventually touched down in Shannon this Wednesday afternoon—eight days after scores of aviation enthusiasts were left disappointed when a scheduled training exercise was cancelled at the last

minute.

The mammoth aircraft, which has capacity for over 550 passengers, was due to carry out "cross-wind training" last Tuesday week, but plans had to be abandoned at short notice as weather conditions were not suitable.

But strong southwesterly winds this Wednesday were ideal for the purposes of the exercise and the A380 left Toulouse in France and

touched down on the runway in Shannon just before noon.

It was the first time the craft had landed in Ireland and an estimated 100 people came to the airport to see this piece of Irish aviation history at first-hand.

"It landed and came to a full stop before turning and taking off again. I believe they were testing the brakes and carrying out cross-wind training, take-offs and landing in

blustery conditions," said airport spokesperson Clare McEnery.

She explained that through the afternoon the craft did a number of landings, taking off over the west coast before returning to Shannon.

"We did have a number of aviation enthusiasts who managed to come along and see it despite the short notice," Ms McEnery said.

The airport has established a global reputa-



The new Airbus A380, which is in the testing phase of development arriving in Shannon Airport this week. This is the first time this aircraft has operated at an Irish Airport

tion for airline crew training. Its runway, at over 3km in length, is the longest in the country and more suitable for training purposes than Dublin.

Shannon can handle the world's largest passenger, commercial and military aircraft and the largest plane in the world, the Antonov 225 transport

plane has visited in the past.

But it will be some time before the Airbus A380 can take passengers to and from the airport. While the runway is suitable for training, the terminal cannot handle the massive double decker aircraft.

"It's too big and we just can't accommodate it

anywhere at present. At the moment we don't have high density routes from Shannon where 555 passengers can be accommodated on a single flight but that could change in the future," Ms McEnery said.

The French company has only built four test models of the Airbus A380 so far but has

already received in excess of 150 orders from airlines for the jet. No Irish carriers have expressed an interest so far.

The A380 is double decked, with the upper deck extending along the entire length of the fuselage, according to the manufacturers allowing for a spacious cabin with

50 per cent more floor space than the next largest airliner the Boeing 747 jumbo jet. The A380 has a range of some 15,000 kilometres and a cruising speed of 900 kmph. Commercial flights are expected to begin before the end of the year, with Singapore Airlines the first carrier to sell seats.

Guinness crew in floods as Larry