

SHANNON AIRPORT AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AVIATION

By ARTHUR QUINLAN

TO-DAY (Friday) marks the seventh anniversary of the official opening of Shannon Airport as a landplane base. It was on the 24th of October, 1945, that the first commercial transatlantic landplane touched down in Ireland, when the American Overseas Airline "Flagship America," arrived from New York on way to London.

The development in the airline industry in such a short period as seven years was brought home very much on Tuesday last, when the first jet aircraft of its kind fitted for commercial work landed at Shannon. This plane, which was the Vickers Viscount, of which Aer Lingus have four on order, represents the very latest in short and medium range flying craft. It caused lively interest amongst the aviation people at the Airport. Seven years ago the Skymaster was the subject of the same inspection, for it represented the latest in design for speed and comfort in the air. Now the Skymaster is completely outdated and is used only as a freight plane and occasionally for charter work. Six different designs of ordinary piston engined aircraft appeared at Shannon before the jet came to outmode the Skymaster.

HAZARD ALMOST ENTIRELY ELIMINATED.

Even in that period of time flying methods and aids have been so developed that the hazard of flying has been almost completely eliminated. Seven years ago a four-engined aircraft, with one engine cut or "feathered," was a real case of anxiety. To-day a "feathered" engine means absolutely no worry to passenger or crew.

Such aircraft as are seen at Shannon are so highly powered that the elimination of an engine is never even noticed by passengers. The most modern aircraft has four 3,500 h.p. engines which is equivalent to the power of 1,750 small cars.

At the recent Farnborough Air Show the Viscount was flown on one engine to prove its ability, and about two years ago an Air France pilot landed a Constellation in France with a full complement of passengers on one engine.

IRISH AIRLINE'S FLEET.

The Irish Airline have been well advised to invest in the new Viscount turbo-jet aircraft. Their present fleet is made up mostly of Dakotas, which have proved themselves to be the finest twin-engined aircraft ever made, and have, incidentally made millions of profits for their makers, the Douglas Company, but they are now close on twenty years old and have given of their best.

Unenlightened critics have asked why Aer Lingus are investing their money in airscrew jet aircraft, when pure jet planes are surely those of the future? The answer, of course, is that pure jet engined planes, that is those without propellers, are not an economic proposition for short journeys such as the Aer Lingus routes to-day. Pure jet engines, such as those by which the Comet are powered, are at their most efficient height when almost eight miles up. They would scarcely have reached this height on Aer Lingus routes, when they would have to come down again, the result being that the consumption of fuel would be very high. The Viscount, on the other hand, with its four jet driven propellers, each gets 2,400 horse power and 365 lbs. thrust from the jet at take-off. Its economic height is only about half that of the pure jet planes, and at 250 gallons per hour burns only half the quantity of fuel.

MORE RAPID DESCENTS.

Another contrasting development in the Viscount compared with the planes now in use is that descents are made at 1,500 feet per minute, compared with 500 feet per minute at present. Heretofore, this rapid descent would have been very uncomfortable on the ears of passengers, but the new plane is fitted to meet this quick change of air pressure.

Such are the rapid strides being made in the aviation industry that already designers are turning their minds towards the harnessing of atomic energy before they have succeeded in developing a commercial jet plane able to span the Atlantic.

With all this hustle not only are the 1,100 workers at Shannon, but the community generally, asking what is to be the future of the Irish transatlantic airport with more powerful and more modern aircraft on the way?

QUIET CONFIDENCE.

The answer to this is quiet confidence.

Up to now air companies have been prepared to speculate great fortunes on the development of this new industry. The public had to be educated to flying. To do this the companies had to exaggerate many of the facets of flying to encourage people to take to the air. Examples of this is the luxury meals that are served free. During delays hotels are provided free, and above all, the sense of speed in getting from point to point, although great, is worked up in the minds of the people.

In actual fact the greater power the aircraft develops the greater revenue it means for its owners. Speed will not bring in revenue but big passenger loads will. The result is that with the air education of the public completed to coincide with the development of more powerful airliners, that power is being used more and more each day to increase the number of passengers that can be carried by an aircraft. When this load is up to the power of the plane more stopping planes will have to be available to keep up the big passenger loads.

That will mean that, providing facilities are reasonably good, places like Shannon and Gander will always be used while the span between New York and London, Paris, Rome and Berlin remains at more than 3,500 miles.

SHANNON HAS BEST FOG CLEAR AIRPORT.

Shannon has the natural advantage of having the best fog clear record of any airport in the North Atlantic route and this more than adds to the confidence.

One-third of the 700 aircraft that landed at Shannon during September was planned for overflying but were forced in by weather and heavy loads. This percentage went up to seventy one night last week, when 37 aircraft and 1,850 passengers landed at the Airport in a little over twelve hours of the clock. Proof of this theory is that when Skymasters were first put on the Atlantic in 1945, their top load was 35 passengers. Charter companies have, on occasion, almost double this number since. Constellations originally carried only 42 passengers, now 64 are carried on tourist flights. Even Aer Lingus have increased the capacity of the Dakota from 21 to the present figure of 28. The increase of 22 passengers on a Constellation means a profit on the flight of £1,540. This is the sort of operation that makes directors happy and it is the operation that will keep the Irish Government and the people of the nation smiling, too.

LIME

Vol. 64. No. 12,346

JAIL ON DRUNK MOTOR DRIVING CHARGE

ATTEMPTED driving while drunk at 1.30 p.m. on October 9th last was the City District Court charge to-day against Jeremiah Moloney, Ross House Golden, Cashel.

Supt. P. Collieran prosecuted, and Mr. M. Tynan, solr., defended.

Dr. Cecil Molony said that when he examined the defendant at 2.30 p.m. he found him quite drunk and incapable of driving a car. "He was bleary and excited almost to incoherency," said the doctor. "His writing was illegible and he staggered when walking the line."

Detective Sergt. M. Murphy said he got a report in William Street which sent him to Glenworth St. He saw a car near Glenworth St. junction in O'Connell St. parked in the middle of the road. The defendant was behind the wheel, pulling the starter and the choke. Another man was trying to start the engine with a handle. Both were very drunk. He took both into custody.

Sergt. P. Connolly said he was able to start the car with the starter. There was no hand-brake.

Mr. Tynan submitted that the defendant's action when caught by Detective-Sergt. Murphy was not tantamount to attempting to drive.

INTENTION AND INTENT.

The Justice said he had looked very carefully into the law as to when a person might be convicted of driving a car. There was the remote attempt as distinct from the immediate intent. He found that a person sitting in the driver's seat drunk with the key in the ignition but not switched on could not be convicted. However, when the immediate intent was there, with the person concerned having his hands on the control, there could be no doubt about the intention. He found in the present case that there was an attempt to drive and he would accordingly convict.

"A worse case than this is hardly conceivable," he said. "He is a lucky man the Sergeant found him so quickly or he might be here on a manslaughter charge. The public were also lucky because I have no doubt this man was very drunk and absolutely incapable of driving."

He sentenced the defendant to one month imprisonment and suspended his driving licence for a year. In case of appeal he fixed recognizances at £20.

Red Cross Inspection In Limerick

The remarkable growth of the Red Cross movement in Limerick City in recent times was reflected in the attendance at the annual inspection of the combined ladies' and men's units, at the Presbyterian Hall last Friday night. Over 100 members, uniformed and properly equipped, paraded for inspection, under Unit Officers G. Mayne Mrs. F. Keane and Miss P. Brady.

THE INSPECTION.

The inspection was carried out by Dr. C. Molony, Area Medical Director, and Mr. F. D. Carroll Area Director, assisted by Mr. R.