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Dr Tim O'Driscoll, one of the passengers on the Aer Lingus inaugural flight from Shannon to Dublin 50 years ago at the airport this week with ground hostess, Deirdre O'Connell, Limerick. (LL).

## Aer Lingus celebrate 50 years at Shannon

By JIMMY WOULFE

AER LINGUS becalmed its troubled waters at Shannon this Wednesday with a special toast.

The airline celebrated 50 years at the airport in the slipstream of stop-over turbulence generated by its pro-Dublin stance.

While Transport Minister, Mary Geoghegan-Quinn, is organising the semi-State bodies involved in the controversy to belt up, her Junior Minister Colleague, Brendan Daly played his Shannon card at the birthday party.

"I am glad that the assistant secretary of the Department of Transport is

here today and I would like him to bring back the message, that as far as the status of Shannon is concerned we want it to remain that way. It is vitally important for the airport, for the region and for Aer Lingus as well," said Mr Daly.

Kyrl Acton, Aer Lingus chief executive, passenger services, was more circumspect saying that whatever emerged at the end of the day, relations between Aer Lingus and Shannon would develop and be enhanced.

"And this was only right," he said.

Referring to the huge investment by the company in Shannon where the Aer Lingus pay roll bill is about

£10m, he said they would be "out of their mind" putting in this investment to Shannon if was not for the long term.

Aer Lingus Shannon manager, Tom McInerney, the man in the eye of the stopover storm was praised by Geraldine Lambert, chairperson of Shannon Town Commissioners, for the manner in which he has put the Aer Lingus issue at the airport.

And the icing on the birthday cake was an announcement by Tom McInerney that they would fly the Clare football squad to Dublin for their All-Ireland semi-final encounter with Dublin.

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