

Distinguished Air-Marshal From 3YA This Week

Englishman Who Has Settled In Christchurch

(Special to the "Radio Record")

THE president of the Canterbury branch of the Navy League, Air Marshal Sir Robert Clark-Hall, K.B.E., C.M.G., D.S.O., is one of the speakers at the special Empire Day broadcast by the Christchurch branch of the Royal Empire Society and Associate League. This function will take place on Friday, May 24 (Empire Day), and will be relayed from Ballantyne's tea rooms.

Sir Robert Clark-Hall was placed on the retired list on August 11, 1934, and left to settle in New Zealand the following day with his wife and family of three. They live in Ilam Road, Riccarton, and they can be classed as "modern pioneers," for neither Sir Robert nor his wife had ever been out to New Zealand, only having heard of this country through a relative of Lady Clark-Hall's. Sir Robert considers New Zealand a fine country, and finds everyone so friendly toward English people. After the busy and much-travelled life this distinguished air marshal has led, he is thoroughly enjoying the quiet life in New Zealand. The last eight months have been like a holiday, and having acquired a property he intends to live here for good. The children are at boarding school, and Sir Robert considers the schools here quite as good as those in England, and the cost of education much less. Sir Robert does not wish to take any part in public affairs, and as Lady Clark-Hall is fond of gardening, they spend many hours in the open, and just at present they are mainly concerned with their family's education. Sir Robert was educated in H.M.S. Britannia. He was appointed a sub-lieutenant of the Royal Navy in 1902, and was promoted to Lieutenant in 1903.

He learned to fly in a Bristol biplane on Salisbury Plain, and his Royal Aero Club certificate, No. 127, is dated August 2, 1911. He was promoted to lieutenant-commander in October, 1911. In March, 1913, he was attached to the Royal Naval Air Service for armament duties, and from the following July he took charge of experimental work in connection with naval aircraft armament. He was largely concerned with the development of the aeroplane as a fighting machine, and his experiments in 1913-14 with a 2-pounder gun in the nose of a Short pusher float biplane (alleged 200 h.p. Canton-Unne) off Calshot were about the most dangerous and gallant exploits in pre-war service flying.

On the outbreak of war he was appointed squadron-commander, R.N.A.S., and was attached to the Eastchurch

Squadron. He went to Dunkirk with the squadron when it was posted there for reconnaissance duties. He was given the acting rank of commander, R.N., in October, 1914. In recognition of his valuable services at Dunkirk he was made in April, 1918, a Companion of the Distinguished Service Order. In February, 1915, he sailed for the Dardanelles in command of H.M.S. Ark Royal, which had been converted for use as an aircraft-carrier. The aircraft in H.M.S. Ark Royal performed valuable services, and Sir Robert was mentioned in dispatches. In December, 1915, he was promoted commander, R.N., and wing commander, R.N.A.S. In 1916 he returned from the Dardanelles, and in February, 1917, he was appointed to command No. 1 Wing in France. He was promoted wing captain, R.N., in December, 1917. On the formation of the Royal Air Force he was given the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Later, in 1918, the Board of Admiralty, expressing appreciation of the valuable services rendered by this officer, stated "He has twice declined promotion to brigadier-general, R.A.F., because he considered that higher rank would impair his

usefulness to the fleet. Throughout his time on the staff of the admiral commanding aircraft he has worked with absolute singleness of purpose for the advancement of naval flying."

During 1918 he was made a Chevalier of the Legion of Honour (France). On August 1, 1919, his name was removed from the Navy List on appointment to a permanent commission in the R.A.F. with the rank of wing commander. On August 5, 1919, he was promoted to group captain and appointed to command No. 29 Group in Scotland. In October, 1919, he was made a C.M.G. in recognition of distinguished services during the war. On the formation of the R.A.F. Staff College at Andover in 1922 he was appointed to the staff. In January, 1922, he was promoted to air commander. In May, 1924, he was posted to the Middle East to command the Egyptian Group, and in the following December he was appointed chief staff officer to the Middle East Command. In November, 1925, he was appointed to command the Royal Air Force in the Mediterranean.

In March, 1929, he was appointed Director of Equipment at the Air Ministry, and in July, 1929, was promoted to air vice-marshal. In October, 1931, he was appointed air officer commanding coastal area, and was promoted to air marshal in July, 1933. In the King's Birthday Honours in June, 1934, he was made a K.B.E.



AIR-MARSHAL SIR ROBERT CLARK-HALL, now living in retirement in Christchurch.