

"RED DEVILS" IN TRAINING

Strictly speaking we ought to call this story "selecting-Red-Devils-to-be" because these chaps are volunteers from all branches of the Army and the Royal Marines who want to join the Airborne Forces; and they're being put through a heartbreaker course to see if they measure up to requirements.

In squads of 15, officers and other ranks - who are on equal terms when actually at work - take the assault course three times running and, after a short break, two more non-stop circuits. It doesn't matter if you feel exhausted, they want to find out whether you've got that little extra something that keeps the right type going.

They want to test your nerves. Would you crack under strain and jeopardise an important job? If you're a little soft physically, you can be tuned up - and you will be! - but nobody can give you nerve and guts.

Here's a lovely test - with a nice lot of big holes to grab when you land. In these preliminary tests four men out of ten fail because the standard is so high. Of course, they all take a really stiff medical first to make sure they're fit.

It's all voluntary. They don't have to do the tests if they don't fancy them - but if they don't it's goodbye to hopes of becoming a Red Devil. Since they began in 1940 they've built up a tradition which only the toughest can maintain.