

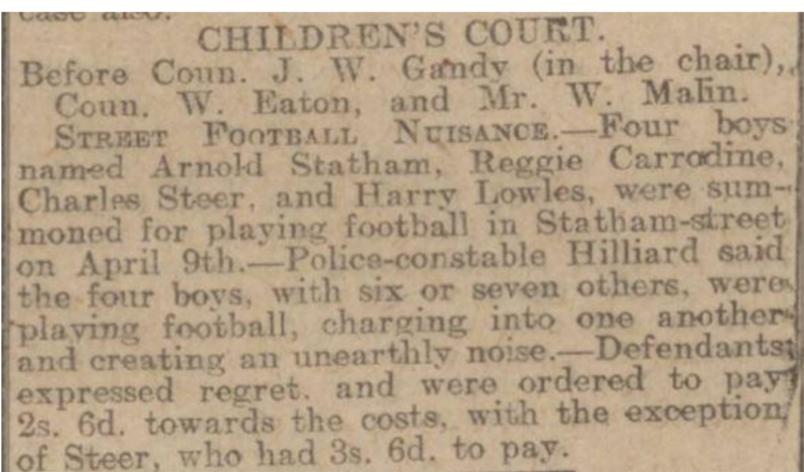


# Charles Henry Steer

## 92 Kedleston Road

Charles was born in July 1898 and lived his early years at 186 Uttoxeter Old Road. His family moved to 8 White Street in 1905 and then to 92 Kedleston Road in 1909. His father, William, was a schoolmaster at a local secondary school.

In April 1912 Charles appeared in the Children’s Court alongside other local boys. The *Derby Daily Telegraph* for 16 April reported the case:



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In August 1914, Charles was in a party of schoolchildren who were in Paris on a school trip when the war broke out. There was some anxiety in the press about their safety, but they all returned as planned.

Charles volunteered for the Army in March 1916 when he was still 17, giving a false age – he was only 18 in July 1916. There are many recorded instances of boys being enlisted and it is estimated that 250,000 underage recruits were admitted to the army during the war. It was not necessary

to produce written evidence of age in order to enlist.

He went on to serve with the 1<sup>st</sup> Infantry Seaforth Labour Company before being transferred to the Royal Garrison Artillery in November 1916. He was posted to France in the following March (while still only 18) and on 13 July 1917 was transferred to a home establishment as he was under age to serve abroad. Nineteen was the minimum age to be posted abroad. However, the army did not automatically discharge underage boys from the army – even if their parents wrote requesting their son be released.

Charles seems to have been transferred back and forth between the Labour Corps and the Royal Garrison Artillery. He was finally discharged from the RGA as a “Gunner” in September 1919. By that time he was based in artillery forts that defended against invasion – including Shoreham and Weymouth.

After the war Charles resumed his job as a bank clerk with the London City & Midland Bank, rising to the rank of Bank Manager. In 1928 he married Norah Boden in Ashbourne. Charles died in 1976.

*Interested to know more about underage soldiers? Go to:*

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guides/zcvdhyc>