

Leslie Binns



In early 1966, eight local servicemen who had lost their lives during the Second World War were acknowledged by having streets named after them. These streets were built within a newly established state in Altona North. One of these streets was Binns Street, named after Gunner Leslie Binns.

Leslie Binns was born in Footscray on 18 November 1924 to parents Percival (Percy) Kilmarnick Binns and Mary Ellen Binns (nee Goodship). The family remained in Footscray after Leslie's birth, until about 1940, when they moved to 58 Nellie Street¹ Altona. Percy and Mary were to become longtime residents of Altona.

Not a great deal is known of Leslie's early years in Footscray, but we do know that he, like many of this era, left school at the end of the 8th grade. This would have meant Leslie was about 14 or 15 years old and looking for employment. From his enlistment records, we also know that he had noted his occupation as a casual farm labourer and was living with his parents, but we don't know whether he was working with his father on their property in Nellie Street, or on other properties within the district.

At the age of 18, on 2 August 1943, Leslie Binns enlisted into the Australian Army and took up his enlistment on 9 August at the Royal Park barracks. Within a week, Private Leslie Binns had been assigned to the 1st Australian Field Artillery who were stationed near Sydney, New South Wales. We do not know why he enlisted at such a young age, whether it was from his sense of duty, wanting to do what his mates were also doing, or the fact that his father had served as a captain in the Australian army during World War 1. His assignment to the 1st Australian Field Artillery saw him appointed as Gunner Leslie Binns and he commenced his training as a gunner with his battalion. It was within a further week that Leslie Binn either fell ill, or the results of his initial medical examination revealed that he had contracted leukemia, and he was admitted to the 113 Australian General Hospital at Concord, near Sydney.

Things appear to have progressed very quickly from then as Leslie quickly succumbed to his illness and passed away on the 23 August 1943. There is nothing within his military file to indicate when his parents were informed of his illness and whether they were able to make the journey to Sydney to be by his bedside before he succumbed to his illness.

Gunner Leslie Binns is interred within the Rookwood War Cemetery, near Sydney, New South Wales. Both his parents, Percy and Mary Binns, were still living within Altona when the council made their decision to name Binns Street after their son, Leslie Binns, in early 1966.



Grave Headstone - Sydney War Cemetery

¹ Nellie Street was renamed Civic Parade in the 1960's

References

- Age (Melbourne), 28 August 1943, p 8
- Altona Star, 28 April 1966, p 4
- Birth, Death & Marriage - Victoria records accessed 31 May 2023
- Department of Veteran Affairs Nominal Roll accessed 31 May 2023
- Electoral Rolls 1922 to 1967
- National Archives of Australia, WW2 Service Records – Leslie Binns, Item 6253117, accessed 13 July 2023
- National Archives of Australia, WW1 Service Records – Percival Mangan, Item 3083838, accessed 14 July 2023
- Sydney War Cemetery Records, accessed 13 July 2023 (<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2105900/sydney-war-cemetery/>)
- Virtual War Memorial Australia (www.vwma.org.au), accessed 13 July 2023

Research: Graeme Reilly (ALHS 2023)

Edited: Michelle Yu