

Leslie Binns



In early 1966, the names of eight local servicemen, who lost their lives during the Second World War, were assigned as street names within the newly established estate in Altona North. One of these 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 Binns family had immigrated to Australia in 1921, first landing in Sydney and then moving to the Melbourne suburb of Footscray. Percy and Mary had three other children, all girls, two of whom were born in Bradford UK, prior to Leslie's birth. The Binns family remained in Footscray, after Leslie's birth, until about 1940 when they moved to 58 Nellie Street¹ Seaholme. 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 are aware that he, like many of this era, had left school at the end of the 8th grade. This would have seen Leslie as being about 14 or 15 years old and now 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, around their property in Nellie Street, or he was working 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. Whether it was his sense of duty, doing 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, we do not know why he enlisted at such a young age.

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

His assignment to his unit 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 succumb 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 alive and still living within Altona when the council made their decision to name Binns Street after Leslie Bin in early 1966. However, Percy Binns was to pass away the following year on 12 September 1967 and is interred within the Altona Memorial Park with his wife, Mary, who passed away on 14 October 1972.



Grave Headstone - Sydney War Cemetery

References

Age (Melbourne), 28 August 1943, p 8

Altona Star, 28 April 1966, p 4; 21 September 1967, pg 15; 25 October 1972, pg 9

Birth, Death & Marriage - Victoria records accessed 31 May 2023

Department of Veteran Affairs Nominal Roll accessed 31 May 2023

Electoral Rolls 1922 to 1972

National Archives of Australia, WW2 Service Records – Leslie Binns, Item 6253117, accessed 13 July 2023

Sydney War Cemetery Records (<https://www.cwgc.org/visit-us/find-cemeteries-memorials/cemetery-details/2105900/sydney-war-cemetery/>) accessed 13 July 2023

Virtual War Memorial Australia (www.vwma.org.au), accessed 13 July 2023

England Census Records for 1901 and 1911

Passenger List P&O ship Beltana, 1920/21