



Sarah Luke

A pretty good deal? Analysing the burials at Gladesville Hospital Cemetery (1880 to 1903)

The current site interpretation of the cemetery at Gladesville Hospital, in New South Wales, Australia, makes use of several tropes frequently perpetuated in descriptions of graveyards attached to nineteenth-century psychiatric institutions. The underlying assumption is that the site contains 1,226 unmarked burials which are symbolic of a horrendous social marginalisation, and that these people were swiftly ‘forgotten’ in death due to the stigma of being buried in an institutional graveyard. By analysing several case studies from Gladesville’s institutional cemetery, and comparing their situation with that of public graveyards in NSW, this paper will show that in fact Gladesville’s burial ground presented a rather good deal to its pauper patients since it offered memorialisation, and high security, which was in stark juxtaposition with public burials offsite. This paper is based on an article published in *Mortality* in January 2025, ‘Grave Concerns: Reconsidering the burials at Gladesville Hospital for the Insane, New South Wales, 1880-1903’(<https://doi.org/10.1080/13576275.2025.2449898>).