The island of Hong Kong became a British colony in 1860. By the 1850s and 1860s, the population of the territory grew rapidly thanks to the influx of foreign traders from places like London and India. This was a great period for a Jewish cemetery. A 10,720 square foot plot of land (a compound with a 999-year lease) was purchased by David Sassoon from the British Crown to be used solely as a burial ground and, in 1853, the cemetery was officially opened under the name of David’s son, Ruben David Sassoon.

**THE HONG KONG JEWISH CEMETARY**

Hong Kong’s Jewish Cemetery is an oasis of peace and tranquility. Located in Happy Valley, it is surrounded by high rise apartment blocks, with the ornate fence dated 1853 by a railway line beside it. It lies out on the flat and has its own chapel and tensor (ritual Bath) room.

**1855.**

According to local lore, this is the site where the legend of the golden lamb is said to have occurred. It is said that a golden lamb appeared on the rooftops of the Jewish community in Hong Kong, and this was a sign of the community’s prosperity. In the 19th century, the community was known for its wealth, and the golden lamb was a symbol of this.

**As the Community prospered, the mausoleum grew larger and more elaborate.**

In the late 19th century, the Jewish community in Hong Kong was one of the wealthiest in the world. This was due to the success of the Sassoon family, who were involved in trade and banking. The cemetery was expanded to accommodate the growing number of Jewish immigrants to Hong Kong.

**In the original section of the cemetery – behind the Chapel – Sephardic graves predominate.**

Some of the inscriptions on these graves include Arabic numerals, as many of these people emigrated from Iraq and they do not doubt up their traditions.

**Towards the end of the 19th century and up to 1937, when Russian Jews began to move to Hong Kong.**

Many of these people were from the Russian Jews who had been expelled from the new Soviet Union. They found refuge in Hong Kong, which became a haven for Jewish refugees.

The cemetery was expanded in the late 19th century to accommodate the growing number of Jewish immigrants. The chapel was also constructed at this time, as it was seen as a way to provide a place of peace and rest for the deceased.

**As Hong Kong continued to grow in the trading gateway to China, the community expanded again.**

People from all over the world in hopes of doing business here. Conversions of this group, which are scattered throughout the cemetery, include inscriptions in the French, German, and, of course, English.

**The chapel and visitors’ room**

The Jewish Historical Society maintains a database of all the cemetery records and is always looking to add information to it. If you know someone who is related to one of the deceased members of our community, please ask them to contact us.

![The chapel and visitors’ room](image.jpg)

![A marble stele stands in front of the tomb](image.jpg)