

**Historic Building Appraisal**  
**Parsee Cemetery - Service Hall, Gardener's House & Pavilion**  
**Wong Nai Chung Road, Happy Valley, Wan Chai, Hong Kong**

The Parsees originally came from the Pars area of Persia (Iran) but were driven from their homeland to India during the seventh century AD after the Muslim conquest of Iran. The Parsees were minorities in the Indian population who mostly lived in Bombay. They practiced Zoroastrianism (瑣羅亞斯德教/拜火教/祆教). As a minority group, Parsees maintained a strong sense of identity. *Historical Interest*

In the first land sale of Hong Kong held in June 1841, seven out of the 47 lots were bought by the Parsees. Some of the famous Parsee traders in Hong Kong included J.H. Ruttonjee (律敦治, 1880–1960) and H.N. Mody (麼地, 1838–1911). Mody got involved in many important public work projects such as the Praya Reclamation Scheme during the period 1890-1904, and donated funds for the foundation of the University of Hong Kong.

The Parsee Cemetery (波斯墳場), also known as the Zoroastrian Cemetery, was established at Happy Valley in 1852. It is the only Parsee Cemetery in Hong Kong. The first burial was in 1858. At present there are about 180 graves in the Cemetery.

The cemetery complex is bounded by sturdy granite walls with a balustrading of classical um-shaped balusters. The arched entrance way is also built of granite with rusticated stepped voussoirs and ornamental wrought iron gates and overthrow in **Regency Style**. *Architectural Merit*

Just inside the cemetery on the right-hand side, there is a small one-storey **Gardener's House**, now much altered and modernized but still retaining classical um-shaped balustrading to the roof parapet.

At the south-west corner of the cemetery can be found the Service Hall and Pavilion. The **Pavilion** is built in simple elegant **Neo-Classical Style** featuring square rusticated corner pillars and interspersed **Tuscan Order** columns supporting a simple entablature, cornice and flat roof.

The **Service Hall** is a one-storey L-shaped building with beautifully crafted ashlar walls in line pointing and classical um-shaped balustrading mounted on a projecting cornice at parapet level. Unusual features are the banel-vanlted roof and **Gothic style** pointed arches to door and windows

openings not normally found in a Neo-Classical style building such as this.

Together with interesting gravestones and monuments, the cemetery buildings form a rare and interesting group of buildings combining Western architecture and Parsee traditions. Dating back to the early 1840s and 1850s they have considerable built heritage value as well as being part of Hong Kong's history. The Gateway, Pavilion and Service Hall appear to be unaltered and authentic, however the Gardener's House has been considerably altered but these alterations may be reversible.

***Rarity,  
Built Heritage  
Value &  
Authenticity***

The social value of the cemetery and its buildings lies in their role in providing for the needs of the Parsee community. It is the only Cemetery built for the Parsee community in Hong Kong and has existed for more than 150 years. Situated next to the Hindu Temple on Wong Nai Chung Road opposite the Hong Kong Jockey Club, the Parsee Cemetery is a historic local landmark with a great deal of local interest.

***Social Value  
& Local  
Interest***

The vicinity of Happy Valley is a cluster of historic cemeteries such as the neighbouring Hong Kong Cemetery (香港墳場), Hindu Cemetery (印度墳場), Jewish Cemetery (猶太墳場) and Muslim Cemetery (回教墳場).

***Group Value***

It is considered that the question of adaptive re-use does not arise, unless the cemetery is resumed or sold for development purposes but this situation is probably unlikely to arise.

***Adaptive  
Re-use***