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The Hong Kong Heritage Project: Preserving Corporate and Community History

Amelia Allsop
The Hong Kong Heritage Project

This report is dedicated to the memory of Clement Cheung, one of the original members of the Hong Kong Heritage Project team, who sadly passed away in 2018.

Business archives in Hong Kong

When the Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP) was founded in 2007, it was one of the first corporate archives to open its doors in Hong Kong. The archive, which houses the papers of the Kadoorie family and their business interests, was established by The Hon. Sir Michael Kadoorie to “save now for the future”. It followed in the footsteps of HSBC’s Asia Pacific Archive, founded in 2004, which pioneered business archives in Hong Kong. Today, more than a decade on, there are approximately six corporate archives in the city, although not all are open to the public.¹ The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) is one of the few jurisdictions in the world that has no archival legislation covering the retention of government records, calling into question the availability of sources for the future historian.² And so, in a city with no archival law, non-government archives can play an important role in preserving, and in some cases, providing access to, Hong Kong’s recent history. Archives have a particularly important role to play in the preservation of Hong Kong’s history at a time when the SAR’s political and social identity is being challenged and redefined. They also provide spaces where Hong Kong’s history—its colonial past and post-1997 present—can be found and interpreted. However, Hong Kong’s historical record is not always so easily accessible.

During the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong (1941–1945) for example, a period when Hong Kong was a British Crown Colony, a great number of government records were either destroyed or lost. Later in the century, as the 1997 watershed approached (the date marking the handover of Hong Kong from Britain to China), civil servants transferred government records held at Hong Kong’s Public Record’s Office (today known as the Government Records Service) to Britain. These records are now housed at The National Archive in Kew, London, making them all but inaccessible—except at great expense—to Hong Kong-based researchers.³ And so, in a place where politics and business has always been closely intertwined, business archives provide important spaces where Hong Kong’s history can be found and interpreted. More widely, archives of all stripes—either government, religious or community repositories—can provide societal value. This is especially true today as Hong Kong’s past is increasingly being scrutinized, interrogated and explored by local researchers as well as those outside of Hong Kong, coinciding with the development of new “Hong Kong studies” programs around the world, for example at the universities of Bristol in Britain and British Columbia in Canada.
This report describes the founding of HKHP and provides details about the Kadoorie family’s history, a family with historic ties to Hong Kong. The report will also provide a glimpse into the archive’s core collections, many of which will be of interest to Hong Kong researchers.

The Kadoorie family

Formerly merchant farmers of Jewish origin, the Kadoorie family settled in Baghdad, Iraq, many centuries ago. Eleazar Silas (Elly) Kadoorie (later Sir), son of Silas Kadoorie and Reemah Yacoob Elaazar Yacob, made his way to the East from Baghdad via Bombay to work for the Sassoons at the tender age of fourteen; the Kadoories being related to the Sassoons by marriage. Also hailing from Baghdad, the Sassoons were Chief Bankers to the Pashas and were one of the earliest and most successful Jewish families to arrive in the Far East. Following increasing persecution of the Jewish community in Baghdad, the Sassoons fled to Bombay where patriarch David Sassoon opened his modest trading house (which later became David Sassoon & Sons) in 1832. In 1844 David’s son Elias Sassoon arrived in Canton as the first Jewish merchant to work in the factories, and in 1850 he made Shanghai his personal base. Within five years the Sassoons held a solid footing along the whole China coast, trading in tea, opium, and other commodities. A Hong Kong office was opened in 1857 and during this time most of the “Baghdadi” Jews in both China and Hong Kong were in the Sassoon family employ. In 1867 Elias opened E.D. Sassoon & Co. in Bombay, and in 1880 a young Elly Kadoorie gained his first foothold in the commercial world, working as a clerk earning 37 rupees a month.
Elly was soon posted to the north of China where he spent time in the Treaty Ports of Shanghai, Wei Hai Wei (today’s Weihai), Tientsin (Tianjin) and later Ningpo (Ningbo), where a minor incident changed the course of the family’s history. Due to the absence of the manager, Elly was left in temporary charge of the office when an outbreak of plague caused him to withdraw a barrel of Jeyes fluid (the powerful and expensive disinfectant) without permission, and for this he was let go. This incident was to mark the beginning of Elly’s career on which his son Lawrence Kadoorie (later Lord) remarked: “this happy occurrence upon which the family fortunes are founded should be depicted by a barrel of disinfectant rampant upon the Kadoorie Coat of Arms.”

Elly then returned to Hong Kong, where his brother Moshi gave him HK$500 to start anew. With this money he set himself up as a broker alongside his first partner Mr. Joseph, forming “Joseph & Kelly” in around 1887 (Elly used the anglicized “Kelly” at the start of his business career in response to the snobbism and antisemitism prevalent in early Hong Kong but resumed his original surname in 1901). Elly later left the partnership and joined forces with Solomon Sassoon Benjamin and George Potts. Based in Queen’s Road Central, “Benjamin, Kelly & Potts” soon became one of the premier brokerage houses in Hong Kong, playing a role similar to a merchant bank or underwriter. Their clients included notable Hong Kong businesses such as Green Island Cement, Kowloon Docks and the South China Morning Post daily newspaper, the latter turning to the firm for financial support soon after it was formed in 1903.
Shortly after his fortieth birthday in 1906, Elly decided to try his luck as an independent and parted ways with Potts and Benjamin to form his own brokerage house named “E.S. Kadoorie & Co.” (which later became “Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons”). Elly invested heavily in sugar and rubber plantations across Asia, where he made his wealth. Elly would travel extensively between Hong Kong, London and Shanghai, and following a brief retirement, opened a Shanghai office in 1912. In 1897 he married Laura Mocatta, who hailed from a prominent European Sephardi Jewish family. Moses Mocatta had founded the family’s London-based fortunes in the early 1670s. He was originally from Amsterdam, where the family were merchants and diamond traders for half a century, having fled to the Netherlands from Portugal to escape the Inquisition. Over successive generations, the Mocattas fulfilled a unique role as exclusive brokers of precious metals to clients such as the Bank of England, the Royal Mint and the East India Company. After 100 years they went into partnership with the Goldsmids, so that the firm became “Mocatta & Goldsmid” in 1779. Shortly after her wedding to Elly, Laura bore three sons; Lawrence (1899–1993), Victor (1900–1900), who died in infancy, and Horace (1902–1995). Laura died in a fire at the family’s Shanghai home in 1919.

Alongside his younger brother and fellow broker Ellis Kadoorie (1867–1922), who arrived in Hong Kong in 1883, Elly made a series of shrewd business investments that were to stand the test of time. For example, Elly was one of the original seven subscribers to China Light & Power’s (CLP) Memorandum and Articles of Association when founded in 1901. His brokerage company provided part of CLP’s funding capital, whilst his brother Ellis (later Sir) invested in CLP shares as early as 1918. CLP started life as a small utilities company at a time when electricity was still a novelty around the world. In the post-war years, Lord Kadoorie, Elly’s son, was a driving force behind the company’s success as it met Hong Kong’s rapidly increasing electricity demand while supporting the city’s manufacturing, textile and industrial boom of the mid-twentieth century. Today, the company supplies electricity to 80% of the city’s population and is the leading investor and operator in the energy business in the Asia-Pacific region. The family have also been involved in the hospitality industry in Hong Kong and Shanghai for over one hundred years. In 1906, Ellis Kadoorie became a major shareholder of The Hongkong Hotel Limited (est. 1866), which later merged with The Shanghai Hotels, Limited to form The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels Limited (HSH, est. 1923). Elly Kadoorie was appointed to the Board in 1921, and his son Horace Kadoorie (later Sir) and grandson Michael Kadoorie (later Sir) later became company Chairmen. HSH is the owner and operator of the Peninsula Hotel brand, whose original hotel in Hong Kong played an important role in Hong Kong’s history, for example as the site of the British surrender to the Japanese in 1941. HSH also owns and operates historic tourism sites in Hong Kong such as The Peak Tram—Asia’s oldest funicular—as well as The Peak Tower and The Repulse Bay.
The Kadoorie brothers were also keen philanthropists who founded schools, hospitals and social clubs throughout the world but particularly focused on Hong Kong, China and the Middle East. Elly Kadoorie’s charitable philosophy was that “wealth is a sacred trust to be administered for the good of society”. He and his brother Ellis were benefactors of schools, hospitals and other charitable institutions across the globe. Elly made a pact with his brother whereby he was to focus on philanthropy abroad while Ellis was to focus on philanthropy in China. As an early supporter of women’s rights, Elly was among the first to provide non-denominational educational facilities for women in many parts of the Middle East in collaboration with the French-Jewish charity the Alliance Israélite Universelle (AIU, est. 1860). The creation of these Kadoorie schools reflected a wider modernizing drive in education that took place around the world at the turn of the twentieth century. The AIU schools have since been credited with creating a professional class of women and for integrating minorities, especially in Ottoman Iraq, in the inter-war period. Meanwhile, and in collaboration with prominent Chinese businessman Lau Chu Pak, Ellis founded the Ellis Kadoorie Chinese Schools Society which opened non-denominational schools for Chinese boys and girls in Hong Kong and China at a time when English-language education was solely provided by missionary societies. Alongside
fellow Hong Kong dignitaries such as Robert Ho Tung and Paul Chater, Ellis also lent his support to the opening of a new university for Hong Kong (today's University of Hong Kong). Opened in 1911 and described as an “instrument of British cultural imperialism in China” by the University’s historian Peter Cunich, the university also created a new class of educated Chinese graduates who would push against British dominance in Hong Kong’s tight-knit world of business.\textsuperscript{12}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{Kadoorie.jpg}
\caption{Lord (Lawrence) Kadoorie, Baron of Kowloon in Hong Kong and the City of Westminster, pictured in the House of Lords in 1982. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.}
\end{figure}

As noted earlier, Ellis died in 1922. He arranged for his fortune to be divided into three parts in his will: one third to the British Government for the purpose of building schools in “Palestine or Mesopotamia”, one third to the Anglo-Jewish Association and the final third to his brother, Elly. The bequest was used by the British Government to establish two agricultural schools in Palestine (administered by the British under a League of Nations mandate) in 1930—one for Arabs and another for Jews—and served the dual purpose of providing much-needed schools without incurring initial government capital expenditure. The schools went on to play an important role in the development of a coherent education policy in Palestine in the 1930s and continued to do so after the State of Israel was established in 1948.\textsuperscript{13} After the war, Elly’s sons, Lawrence and Horace, continued the family’s philanthropic mission. In 1951 they founded the Kadoorie Agricultural Aid Association (KAAA) to help refugees from China establish themselves as farmers by providing them with livestock, interest free loans and agricultural training in Hong Kong. In 1956 the Kadoorie Farm was founded on the upper slopes of Tai Mo Shan as a training center and experimental farm. Today, the Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden (KFBG) raises awareness of ecological and sustainability issues and undertakes
species and ecosystem conservation in Hong Kong and South China. The KAAA’s historic records, as well as oral histories and photographs pertaining to the charity, are today housed in HKHP’s archive and will be explored in further detail below.

![Image](https://example.com/image1)

**Figure 5.** Distribution of KAAA cement in Sai Kung, 1950s. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.

![Image](https://example.com/image2)

**Figure 6.** A New Territories farmer with her cattle, 1950s. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.

**Building the archive: Our collection**

In early 2007 Sir Michael Kadoorie appointed CLP’s Director of Strategy, Peter Greenwood, to create a heritage organization that would “save the past for the future” by preserving the history of the Kadoorie family and their businesses, recording oral history interviews with Hong Kong people and promoting heritage awareness in the city. The project was to be funded by the Kadoorie family and their two main business interests: CLP and HSH. By April 2007, Mr. Greenwood had recruited three team members: Fanny Iu, Amelia Allsop, and Clement Cheung, who have a background in corporate
communications, history and research, and information management, respectively. The following year, Melanie Li, a former news editor, and Edward Kwong, a CLP executive, also joined the team (in 2013 Mr. Greenwood retired and Nicholas Colfer from Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons succeeded him in leading HKHP). One of the first tasks to be tackled by the HKHP team was to devise a project name. After much deliberation, “Our Home, Our History—The Hong Kong Heritage Project” was chosen, an all-encompassing name designed to reflect the project’s mission to preserve Hong Kong’s history, and the Kadoorie Family’s historic ties with the city. Today, “The Hong Kong Heritage Project” is used for short.

![Figure 7. Clement Cheung, Project Archivist, pictured in the HKHP Archive in 2014. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.](image)

The team set about acquiring records in earnest. The first record fonds to be acquired by HKHP were the records of the Kadoorie family’s holding company “Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons” (SEKS), an entity mentioned earlier. The collection dates from 1934 to 2007 and is primarily in English, with some French and Hebrew. Its creators are Horace Kadoorie, Chairman of HSH (1950–1985), and Lawrence Kadoorie, the long-running Chairman of CLP (1935, 1939, 1955 until his death in 1993). Together, the Kadoorie brothers held chairmanships or directorships in over twenty corporate entities. Luckily, both Horace and Lawrence were keen and assiduous record keepers. Their records chronicle not only the history of the vast Kadoorie business empire which encompassed utilities, hospitality, land, transport and construction, but also Hong Kong’s political and social landscape in the twentieth century. Both Lawrence and Horace worked on numerous government and non-government committees during their lifetimes, many of which shaped and influenced Hong Kong Government policy. For example, Lord Kadoorie served on several government advisory bodies from the 1930s to the 1980s, including on public transport, education, currency, labor and taxation committees. He was appointed an Unofficial Member of the Legislative Council in 1950 (the legislature of the Hong Kong Government) and conferred a Peerage in Britain’s House of Lords in 1981. These activities, which touch
on many aspects of Hong Kong’s twentieth century history, are chronicled in detail in the archive through correspondence files, speeches, research reports and publications.\textsuperscript{16}

The SEKS collection is by far the largest fonds held by HKHP, measuring 79 linear meters. The collection was originally kept in storerooms in the Kadoorie family’s head office in Hong Kong. Between 2007 and 2009, the records were appraised on-site according to specific selection criteria (in short: records with relevance to the Kadoorie family, their businesses and charities, as well as Hong Kong’s wider history). Selected records were transferred to CLP’s then Head Office (147 Argyle Street, Kowloon) where the project was based for accessioning, cataloging, and preservation. It is estimated that around 80\% to 90\% of the family’s historic records were transferred to HKHP, which are held by the archive on permanent loan. During this acquisition period, archival policies, rules, and procedures were formulated and implemented, and Amelia Allsop and Clement Cheung set about designing HKHP’s new repository and sourcing materials including acid free paper, folders, and equipment to preserve the collection. The SEKS fonds was catalogued using a system designed by Mr. Cheung between the years 2007 and 2009. When the project website was launched in 2009, portions of the SEKS collection were searchable online using the HKHP website’s online catalogue.\textsuperscript{17}

Over time, new collections were acquired from Kadoorie businesses which served to enrich the core SEKS collection. Businesses were encouraged to donate their records through internal communication channels such as email, roving exhibitions, and staff newsletters. These channels helped to disseminate the message that records of historical value should be preserved and donated to HKHP where they would be professionally managed and cared for. In parallel, HKHP fostered close working relationships with senior managers and record creating departments, thereby ensuring that HKHP was the first point of contact when records of historical value were found. As a result of these efforts, HKHP has received numerous donations from Kadoorie businesses and charities. For example, in 2010, HKHP received a major record donation from HSH which includes the two companies that preceded its formation. As outlined above, HSH is one of the oldest hospitality firms to be founded in Hong Kong, and one of the earliest companies to be listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange. The collection, which dates from 1884 to 1989 and measures 3.3 linear meters, is held on loan and has been designated a “Special Collection” due to its historic significance, special preservation requirements and importance to HSH’s corporate memory. It comprises administrative records including minute books, records of shareholders’ meetings, Register of Directors, contracts and agreements, lease agreements, share certificates and architectural drawings of hotels. The archive retains a particularly strong set of records relating to The Grand Hotel des Wagons-Lits, a hotel once located in the Foreign Legation in Beijing and founded by French and German individuals in 1905. Together, these historic records constitute a wealth of legal data and institutional history about HSH and its historic hotels in Hong Kong and Shanghai.

In 2012, HKHP received two batches of records from CLP on permanent loan. The first collection was donated by CLP’s Corporate Secretarial Department and measures 4.2 linear meters of papers. Collection highlights include CLP’s earliest Annual General Meeting reports (1902–1940), the first of which was published in 1902 at a time when the company’s balance sheet was a six digit figure, and detailed correspondence from the 1970s with former members of staff who describe their experience of working with the
company. These anecdotes were collected by Edgar Laufer, CLP’s longest serving employee, and describe key moments in the company’s history as well as personal memories of the electrification of the New Territories and the activities of so-called “cable gangs” Library (also in Argyle Street) and include in-house publications and brochures as well as administrative records originally set aside in the 1980s for the purpose of creating a CLP archive.

Figure 8. Negative rolls of CLP’s share register, up to 1941. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.

Another significant collection was donated by KFBG in 2012, when staff working on the farm found, stored away in an old storeroom, a cache of around 20,000 case files (39.3 linear meters). The collection, which is in English and Chinese, chronicles the work of the KAAA. The files are comprised of several series with the largest being the “Application for Assistance” series, written by Extension Officers assessing the income of rural villagers from 1951 until 1983. This collection provides valuable data on village status, lifestyles, socio-economic conditions as well as housing, land holding and income of the non-indigenous communities who migrated to the New Territories in the latter half of the
twentieth century. Smaller series provide information on the working partnership between the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Department and the KAAA, as well as information on rural districts including village plans and photographs of rural scenes in the 1950s and 1960s. When processing the collection, HKHP staff undertook preliminary preservation measures onsite at the Kadoorie Farm over a three-month period in summer 2012 before the records were moved to the HKHP office. In the same year, the archive moved to CLP’s new Head Office in Hung Hom, where HKHP is located today.

**Oral histories and photographs**

Complementing these papers are oral history interviews recorded by the HKHP team. HKHP is proud to be home to Hong Kong’s largest collection of filmed oral histories, with 530 interviews recorded so far. These films capture gestures, facial expressions and emotions that serve to enliven and enrich audio recordings. Interviewees include former Kadoorie business employees (representing around 30% of the collection) as well as members of the public (70%) who are interviewed in both Cantonese and English. Oral histories serve to widen the scope of the archive by recording the lives of “everyday historians”—ordinary people who have lived through seminal moments in Hong Kong’s history such as the Japanese Occupation of Hong Kong, the 1967 riots and the 1997 handover. When the project started in 2007, the team had no experience of the oral history discipline. So how did they go about recording these interviews? Firstly, an experienced oral historian (Kelvin Chow) was employed to train the team in Hong Kong, and other members of staff had the opportunity to join oral history training courses at the British Library in Britain. Later, team members attended conferences hosted by the International Oral History Association. Expertise in the oral history discipline was gradually built over time and through experience.

![Figure 10. Edgar Laufer (1915–2010), CLP’s longest-serving employee, is interviewed by the project team in 2007. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.](image)

Initially, interview subjects were chosen in relation to sixteen themes that were devised by the project team in 2007. These themes related to Kadoorie business entities, or specific subjects associated with Hong Kong’s history. As time went on however, the sixteen themes were seen to be a constraint, especially as interviewees were increasingly referred to the team through networks and contacts in the community, and many of these referrals fell outside of HKHP’s subject areas. As mentioned previously, HKHP’s interviews can be divided into two categories: business-related interviews, and non-business related. The HKHP team worked closely with staff and internal
departments from across CLP, HSH, The Peninsula Hotel, the Peak Tramways, and the Kadoories’ aviation businesses to reach out to retired employees. The team also contacted retirees through informal and formal employee networks. These interviews have led to surprising—as well as confronting—histories. For example, oral histories recorded with CLP retirees provide new insights into technological innovation in the company, the social history of electricity production, as well as more contentious issues such as race relations between British and Chinese engineers and the threat of nationalization in the 1950s. In parallel, the team also interviewed Hong Kong people about their lives. The project’s founder, Sir Michael Kadoorie, was a key referrer of these interviewees. Interview subjects were also found through retirement homes such as the China Coast Community, through village or communal associations, journalists, or by word of mouth. Thanks to HKHP’s strong network within the community, the project has been able to interview underrepresented groups in Hong Kong, such as marginalized communities from impoverished districts such as Sham Shui Po, as well as ethnic minorities, particularly the Nepalese, Portuguese-Macanese and Indian communities.

Interviews were conducted by four members of the project team (Fanny Iu, Amelia Allsop, Melanie Li and Edward Kwong). Each interviewer was responsible for finding interviewees, pre-interview meetings and research, scheduling interviews and setting up and operating a camera. Interview summaries (finding aids) were written by the interviewer and transcripts were outsourced to transcription houses in view of the volume of interviews collected. Oral histories were recorded using the “life history” method, with interviews typically lasting several hours. From 2007 to 2011, interviews were filmed using handheld Sony cameras, Bluetooth microphones and DV tapes which were transferred onto DVD through a third-party producer. In 2011 the project transitioned to using HD digital cameras. Interviewees are asked to sign a consent form, which they are free to edit, and staff members explain copyright issues and how their recording will be processed, deposited, and used. Interviews are catalogued by date, interviewee name and subject terms, and a partial list of HKHP’s interviewees and some interview summaries can be found online on HKHP’s website. A full catalogue of interviewees is available in the archive. So far, HKHP’s oral history interviews have been used by academics, journalists, and authors, and in HKHP’s exhibitions.

Alongside moving film, HKHP also houses an impressive collection of still images, which date from the 1930s to 1990s. The collection of over 20,000 photographs depict an ever-changing Hong Kong, from the development of heavy and light industries to the rise and fall of agriculture. One of the largest collections of images was sourced from Sir Elly Kadoorie & Sons in 2007 to 2008 and comprises 71 albums and hundreds of negatives and loose photographs. The albums depict projects undertaken by various Kadoorie business interests in the engineering, construction, and utilities sector such as Franki Piling, Hongkong Engineering & Construction Co., Ltd., Major Contractors and CLP. These include the construction of the Tai Lam Chung reservoir in the 1950s, the laying of electricity cables in Kowloon and the development of Hok Un Power Station (est. 1921), one of Hong Kong’s earliest power stations which was re-developed in the 1940s. The archive also holds a collection of photographs taken by Lawrence Kadoorie, a keen amateur photographer and President of the Hong Kong Photography Club, who used a miniature Minox camera to capture daily life in the city in the 1950s. Finally, the archive received a major donation of positives and negatives from KFBG in 2008 depicting the work of the KAAA from the 1950s to the 1990s. This collection, numbering in the
thousands, is currently being digitized as a preservation measure and to improve future accessibility.

Figure 11. Cable laying by CLP employees in Kowloon City, 1950s. Photo: The Hong Kong Heritage Project.

Access

In 2009 the HKHP archive was officially opened to the public, and in the same year, the project’s website was launched. In 2014 the website was revamped to host more content, primarily photographs, oral histories, and archival information. HKHP aims to provide archival access to a wide and diverse audience, taking into consideration age, academic interest and geographic location. HKHP is committed to promoting access based on four key principles: equity, communication, responsiveness and efficiency. Researchers can access HKHP’s holdings by appointment and use the repository’s dedicated research area to explore its holdings. Overseas researchers can search portions of the archive’s holdings via the online catalogue, which is available on the project’s website, and archivists are on hand to respond to more complex research queries by email. Much in-house research has been undertaken to enhance access to HKHP’s collections, for example by providing detailed descriptions of key collections. Descriptions increase accessibility and intellectual control and ensure that collections are understood and used in a more efficient way. Similarly, segments of oral history interviews are made available through the project’s social media accounts, predominantly through YouTube, and researchers can access full transcripts and films in-house.

Of course, archival access comes in many forms. Over the past thirteen years this has included an array of exhibitions, education programs and publications, all of which introduce HKHP’s collection in a variety of engaging formats and for multiple audiences.
However, in its primary role as a corporate archive, HKHP also needs to balance access with the needs of the business. Like many archives, only those records created before a certain date (1969) are open to the public, while other series remain permanently closed. Access to the archive is by appointment only and researchers must send their research scope and complete research registration forms to gain access to the collection. Similarly, portions of the archive are closed due to preservation requirements—certain records are simply too fragile to be frequently handled by researchers. Despite these checks and balances, which serve to protect records and their record creators, HKHP has helped pioneer open-access archives in Hong Kong. Since it opened in 2009, the archive has contributed to new scholarship including numerous PhD dissertations, documentaries, and academic publications.

Engagement and exchange

As mentioned earlier, one of the aims of HKHP is to promote heritage awareness in Hong Kong. In keeping with this mission, HKHP engages with three key stakeholders: young people, academics, and the general public. Youth groups are a particularly important group as they can champion the preservation of Hong Kong’s heritage both now and in the future. With this in mind, a formal education program was launched by HKHP in 2013. The “Young Historian Program” (YHP) is a collaborative education platform which seeks to engage students with history outside of the classroom in fun and imaginative ways. The YHP program takes an experiential approach to learning, and its objectives are to inspire, educate, and encourage young people to put their knowledge into practice. Creativity is a guiding force of this program. For example, YHP’s “Drama and History Workshop”, held in partnership with the Girl Guides, used immersive learning techniques to encourage Guides to re-enact the past. Guides received basic theatre training from a drama professional and studied HKHP’s oral history transcripts from which they wrote, and improvised, plays based on historical events. Another long-time YHP partner is the Hong Kong Baptist University’s Department of History (HKBU). In recent years, HKBU history undergraduates, together with secondary students, have had the opportunity to record oral history interviews with their grandparents, as well as industry giants. These testimonies were published in a book, “Professionalism in Hong Kong” (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Heritage Project, 2017), which provided students with the satisfaction of seeing their work in print. YHP has also collaborated with the Government’s Conservation Office to deliver an annual Conservation Workshop to introduce secondary school students to museum laboratories, conservation techniques and the day-to-day preservation work undertaken in the archival sector.
As seen earlier, HKHP engages with the academic and research communities through its archival holdings. In tandem, the project has sought to encourage exchange and dialogue within the archival and academic community by organizing seminars in collaboration with HKU SPACE (School of Professional and Continuing Education) on the subject of archives, oral history and intangible cultural heritage, while team members have also spoken at various conferences, including those hosted by International Council on Archives’ (ICA) East Asian Regional Branch (EASTICA) and the ICA’s Section on Business Archives. HKHP has contributed to archival organizations closer to home through its association with the Hong Kong Archives Society and Business Records Group, and has helped promote the archives practice locally through participation in
International Archives Day celebrations. At the same time, HKHP also undertakes its own research initiatives, for example the “Hong Kong Refuge” project examines the lesser-known history of Hong Kong in the migration and survival of Jewish refugees before and after the Second World War using the records and oral histories held in the archive. Finally, HKHP seeks to share its history with the Hong Kong public through exhibitions hosted in Hong Kong's major museums and community galleries. So far, 13 exhibitions have been organized which explore different facets of Hong Kong’s history in playful and unexpected ways. For example, the “Our Tsim Sha Tsui: Past, Present and Future” exhibition, hosted at the government's Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre, explored the cultural and social legacies of the Tsim Sha Tsui district using interpretative art pieces, Lego models and futuristic urban planning concepts. More recently, the project’s “Eye on Hong Kong” exhibition showcased 60 unpublished black and white Minox photographs from the Lord Kadoorie collection and was featured in international media and the BBC.

Conclusion

As described above, HKHP safeguards and promotes Kadoorie corporate memory. Firstly, the archive preserves records by storing them in climate-controlled conditions and in acid-free folders and boxes. Secondly, the archive enhances access—namely through its catalogue and finding aids—thereby facilitating the quick and easy retrieval of information for legal, branding or corporate heritage purposes. In tandem, by facilitating public access to these records, HKHP helps promote Kadoorie businesses as long-standing, trustworthy brands. As a research hub and center of expertise on Kadoorie-related history, HKHP has also identified new and previously unknown sources, images and content which is shared and used by the businesses. Detailed finding aids have been produced explaining the nature and scope of each record which facilitate a deeper understanding of the company’s history. Having catalogued and meticulously described these records at the fonds, series, and item level, HKHP ensures that information is easily accessible and quickly retrievable by the business as and when needed, for example when legal matters arise. By virtue of the Kadoorie family's involvement in the development of Hong Kong, these records are also of intrinsic value to the wider community. The project’s oral history collection has also served to widen the scope of the archive while preserving the testimony of Hong Kong people from all walks of life. As touched upon earlier, private archives are particularly important in Hong Kong as many of the city's records were destroyed during the war or transferred to London before the Handover of Hong Kong to China. The HKHP archive has therefore enriched Hong Kong’s written and oral record and contributed to new scholarship which enhances understandings of the past.

Business archives have an important social function: to preserve corporate memory, promote scholarship, and encourage an interest in history. As we have seen, such repositories are also important in that they can preserve and provide access to Hong Kong’s history. But how can this role be maximized? Firstly, business archives can enhance and facilitate access to their collections through the use of technology. Photographs and records can be digitized and easily shared online (copyright and confidentiality permitting) via social media channels, which can potentially reach hundreds if not thousands of researchers, students and genealogists. Secondly, corporate archives can work together with major museums and education institutions to share their collections and thereby introduce their holdings to a wider audience. In parallel, business
Archivists must also work together to leverage expertise, provide mutual support and cooperation, and encourage corporations to hire archivists, preserve records and open their collections to the public.

Access to HKHP’s collections will be further enhanced with the opening of a new “Clock Tower” facility in late 2022. The building, situated in Kowloon, was once CLP’s Head Office (1940–2012) and is today a Grade 1 listed Historic Building. The facility will include an electricity museum telling the development of Hong Kong’s power industry; a Hong Kong Heritage gallery showcasing photographs, oral histories, and records from the HKHP archive; and an Intangible Cultural Heritage expo that keeps local customs and traditions alive. The Clock Tower will also provide a permanent home for HKHP’s archive, with a repository built to the highest standards. The key objective of the museum is to enhance access to HKHP’s collection through engaging curatorship and storytelling, and to celebrate the community through the collection and display of materials about the local area and Hong Kong’s history more generally.

1 For a list of business archives in Hong Kong see “The Hong Kong Archives Society Archive Directory”, available at: http://www.archives.org.hk/en/page.php?pagename=archive_directory Not all of the archives listed are available to the public, perhaps because of the familial nature of these companies. There may be more private or corporate archives in Hong Kong than those listed on the HKAS website.


4 Lawrence Kadoorie, The Kadoorie Memoir (Hong Kong, 1979), 84.

5 Vaudine England, The Quest of Noel Croucher—Hong Kong’s Quiet Philanthropist (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1998), 60–64. For further information on the history of the Kadoorie family, see Lawrence Kadoorie, The Kadoorie Memoir (Hong Kong, 1979) and Maisie Meyer, Shanghai’s Baghdadi Jews: A Collection of Biographical Reflections (Hong Kong: Blacksmith Books, 2015).

6 See, Yuk Chui Kong, “Jewish Merchants’ Community in Shanghai: A Study of the Kadoorie Enterprise” (PhD diss., Hong Kong Baptist University, 2017).

7 Timothy Green, Precious Heritage, Three Hundred Years of Mocatta & Goldsmid (London: Rosendale Press, 1984).

8 For further information on CLP and its history, see Nigel Cameron, Power: The Story of China Light (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1982).

9 For a history of HSH see Peter Hibbard, Beyond Hospitality: The History of The Hongkong and Shanghai Hotels, Limited (Singapore: Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2010)


12 See Peter Cunich, *A History of the University of Hong Kong: 1911–1945* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012).


14 See John Strickland, ed. *Southern District Officer Reports, Islands and Villages in Rural Hong Kong, 1910–1960* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

15 Kadoorie business interests past and present include: CLP, HSH, Tai Ping Carpets International Ltd., Kadoorie Estates Limited, Schroders Asia, Nanyang Cotton Mill, Franki Piling, Hong Kong Engineering & Construction Co., Major Contractors, the Hongkong Rope Manufacturing Co., Shanghai Gas, Shanghai Land, Hong Kong Aviation Group Ltd. (Heliservices and Metrojet), The Hongkong and Whampoa Docks, the Hongkong and Kowloon Wharf & Godown and the Far Eastern Economic Review.

16 The Kadoorie brothers were appointed to various government committees and advisory bodies including the Income Tax committee, the Labour Advisory Board, Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, Harbour Ferry Services Advisory Committee, the Port Administration Inquiry Committee and the Board of Education. They were also involved in non-government organizations such as the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Ohel Leah Synagogue.

17 Available at: [https://www.hongkongheritage.org/pages/amssearch.aspx](https://www.hongkongheritage.org/pages/amssearch.aspx).

18 The 16 themes are: the Kadoorries, China Light, Daya Bay, Peninsula Hotel, Kadoorie Farm, Tai Ping Carpets, Peak Tramways, New Territories Development, Manufacturing, Public Housing, Jewish Immigration, Groups & Minorities, Shipping, Aviation, Hong Kong Society and Life History.


23 See the “Hong Kong Refuge” blog for the latest updates on the project: https://hongkongrefuge.wordpress.com/ accessed September 5, 2020.