

Death Railway



Interview with then Prime Minister John Howard – 2004.

I asked (then) Prime Minister John Howard a number of questions pertaining to his time in 1998 that he spent opening the Hellfire Pass Museum and attending the ANZAC Day ceremony at Hellfire Pass – the same time I was there.



PRIME MINISTER
CANBERRA

Mr Andrew Mason

20 FEB 2004

Dear Mr Mason

Thank you for your letter of 9 January 2004 regarding the Hellfire Pass Memorial Museum. Your desire to write a pilgrimage book covering significant World War II sites in Singapore and Thailand for young Australians is commendable.

Hellfire Pass is a sacred place, where Australians, amongst other prisoners of war, suffered greatly. As I walked through Hellfire Pass in 1998, I reflected upon the debt of gratitude that today's Australians owe those that were forced to endure such brutality and terror. We can only wonder how some managed to endure and survive.

To be able to observe and appreciate Hellfire Pass from the air was certainly a privilege. It helped me to comprehend the complexity of the POW-built railway and the horrific conditions under which each POW was forced to work.

The museum at Hellfire Pass is an extraordinary legacy for the future. The wonderful vision and impact of this memorial promises that the memory of what was lost and what was gained at Hellfire Pass will not be forgotten.

I would be delighted for you to include my speech in your book, a copy of which is enclosed. It can also be accessed via the Internet at <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/speeches/1998/anzac98.htm>.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Howard".

(John Howard)