

## An Update From the Owner

### Excavation, Limewash, and the Pursuit of a Second Secret Tunnel...

**September 17, 2005**  
**Hugh Raven, Owner**

*There have been changes at Kinlochaline castle during the past summer.*

*The tradition of journeyman builders - which we think was responsible for much of the original building work in the 14th or 15th century - has been continued. This time our tradespeople were Slovakian, here for the summer season earning to pay student fees, and more than well acquainted with hard physical work.*

*And work hard they have.*

*Much of the oldest parts of the building - the raised ground-floor hall, the first-floor great hall (i.e. the two main rooms), the turnpike stair connecting them, and the entrance hallway - have had fresh coats of snowy limewash. The ground floor hall is the kitchen, and its ceiling - formerly rough-sawn boards installed in the Victorian era - has been plastered over, and painted white. The huge beams still stand proud below the smooth new surface, and we hope will one day sport the highly-coloured paintings that are such a feature of Scottish tower houses.*

*The first and much the largest phase of the restoration of Kinlochaline involved building up. Heading for the sky, we added two more storeys - probably somewhat more than twenty feet. This provides our bedrooms, bathrooms, and the best views in Morvern.*

*This summer we have been burrowing.*

*We have two cellars already - low, vaulted rooms, where between the bare stone curved top and modern damp-proofed cement floor we wash our clothes, keep our frozen food, and store our liquor. The interior walls of the cellars are later than the walls of the building's exterior, and are thought to have been added in the sixteenth century, after the original wooden ground floor was burned in an attack.*

*Around their edges are interesting things.*

*The raised ground floor is perforated with four apertures: two stairs to these cellars; a well; and an unspecified hole, or pit prison, built in an ingo in the exterior wall. It was full of centuries of rubble. One of our Slovakian helpers and I have dug it out - removing 40 bags of mortar, sand, stones, and the bones of small animals, and lowering the floor level by nearly three feet. Now we have hit rock. But we have created a valuable new space. Wine bottles will soon be relocated from the adjacent cellar for future storage here, freeing one of the cellars for another useful purpose.*

*The well has also been excavated further. Many an hour I spent down it last winter, digging with a hand-trowel (it's too narrow for a shovel), and handing bags of spoil to Jane above my head. I got as far as the water-table, and had to stop. But last winter was wet, and if this one is drier we shall resume the labour. Legend has it that if we get down far enough, a passageway will be exposed, leading laterally off the vertical shaft. Follow it and a secret tunnel will enable escape from the castle to the river some eighty feet below. Some legends surrounding this castle have proven true; some are still unresolved.*

*If winter 05/06 allows us the time, we shall find out which category applies in this case - and update this report next summer.*