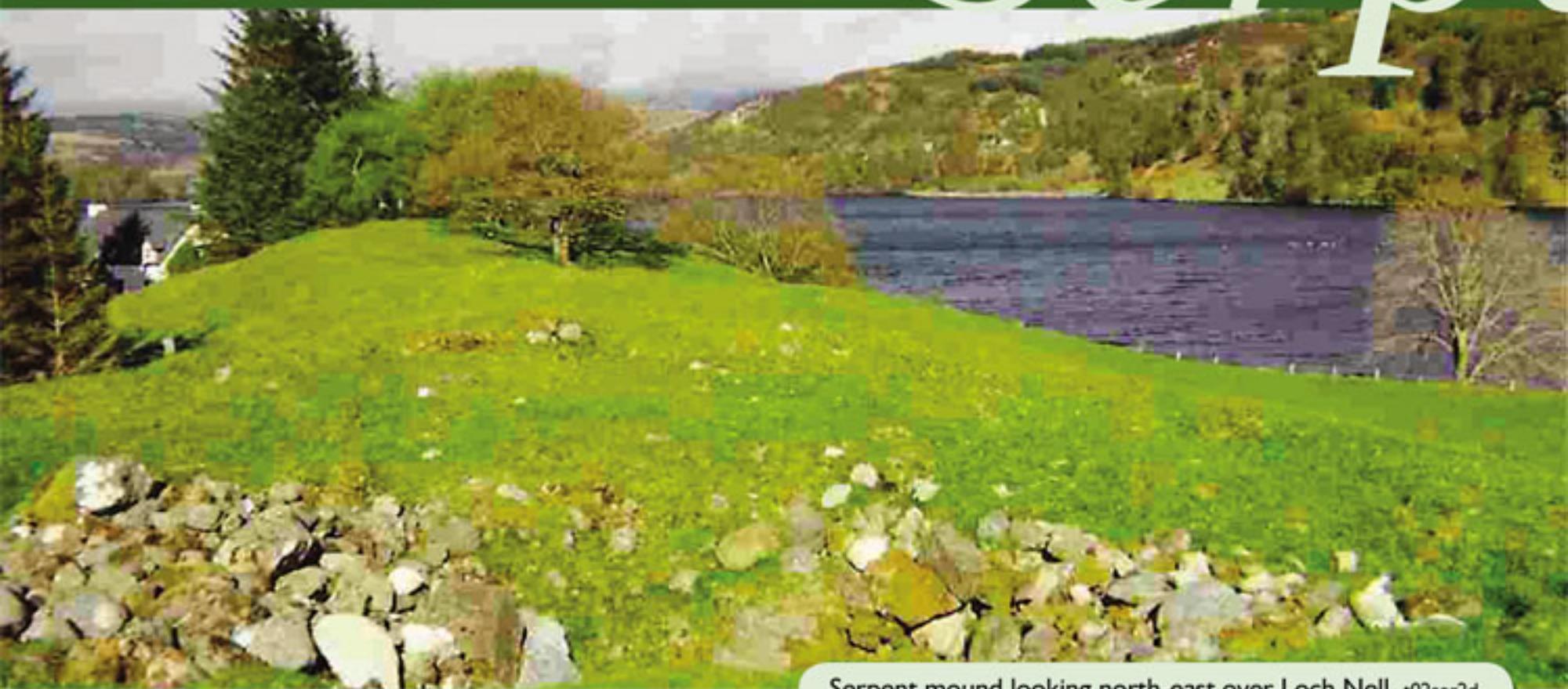


# The Loch Nell Serp



Serpent mound looking north-east over Loch Nell. t02ser2d

**J**ohn Clark, a former mountain path builder in the Highlands and Scottish Wildlife Trust botanical surveyor uses his expertise to find out more about one of Lorn's secret natural wonders.

The first known snake gods were worshipped in Crete 10,000 years ago as the sun god the giver of life.

The snake was also celebrated for its wisdom in Athens, the abode of Athena the goddess of wisdom, who often carried a serpent for a shield sign. When the Egyptians wished to express an extended period (aeon) they depicted a serpent whose tail is concealed by the rest of his body, which they called Uraeus.

Snake deities then spread across the near east in the form of the Sumerians with Babylon as the serpent mother of creation. The cult of the serpent then rose to its peak in India.

Mound building in the USA began more than 2,000 years ago. The largest of the mounds is Cahoke in Illinois despite centuries of erosion; it is still a huge structure which is testimony to the mound builders.

Amid the characteristic tumbledown hills and knolls of Dalriadan rock in Mid-Argyll lies little Loch Nell (Lochnan-Eala, Lake of the Swans). Loch Nell sits about four-

and-a-half miles to the south of Oban.

The loch has a nice enclosed feel about it and harbours a remarkable concentration of archaeological sites within the environs of Glen Feochan.

At the south west end of Loch Nell there slithers the long barrow known as the Serpent Mound which was once claimed to be the best formed prehistoric mound in Europe.

The length of the serpent-shaped mound, following its curves by the ridge to the head to its tail almost on the edge of the loch, is about 300 feet, lying east to west. The sinuous length of the object, as if coming out of the loch, is best seen from the higher ground behind.

In 1871 the exquisitely named Dr Phene of London- a scientist who travelled world-wide in search of traces of

**The Serpent Mound, at the south west end of Loch Nell, is claimed to be the best formed prehistoric mound in Europe.**

nature worship, particularly ophiolatry (the worship of snakes), was in the district. The Doctor had the mound opened up on the 12th of August in the presence of Mr T W Murray-Allan of Glen Feochan and Dr MacGillivray, medical officer of Oban.

Dr Phene, as revealed to the Antiquarian Society, ob-