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OIDI-ICHE NA CALLUINI', CONTINUED As far as we have been able to discover, these wonderful rites were last carried out on Cape Breton about forty years ago • and they had retained many aspects of the ancient pagan ritual carried out among the Celts before recorded time. In the High? lands it was a bullskin, not a sheep skin, the horns and the hooves still attached. He ran around the house sunwise • deiseil • because the ancient Celts oriented all things according to the direction of the path of the sun, and to have gone contrary to this would have been considered unlucky' According to Carmichael's Carmina Gae? lica, the line "descending at the door" refers to the time when the old Highland houses were built of local stone, with very thick walls. The thatch was attached not quite to the very outside of the wall, leaving a ledge for men to stand on when thatching. The bullman would presumably run sunwise around this ledge, because projecting from the wall would be a series of stones from the ground to the ledge, usually near the door. Carmichael adds that there were two skins, the one worn, the other carried in the pocket, a very small piece • and thus line seven of the poem. John Gregorson Campbell in his book Witchcraft and Second Sight in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland (1902) describes the disorderliness of the Calluin ritual and adds another aspect we have so far been unable to explain • another poem, presumably recited prior to the Duan Na Calluin. It went: "The New Year of the yellow bag of hide,/strike the skin (upon the wall),/An old wife in the graveyard,/An old wife in the corner;/Another old wife beside the fire,/A pointed stick in her two eyes,/a pointed stick in her stomach,/Let me in, open this." This is quite far from the Calluinn as practised on Cape Breton • but much of its old form did survive here long after it had deteriorated in the Hebrides. Today, in Scotland, on the 11th of January, Hogmanay (the old date of New Year) what is left of the Calluinn is a children's festival. They go door to door and recite a poem and receive a treat. On Cape Breton the ritual survived more in its old form because of changes that gave it a new lease on life. Specifically, it was infused with the spirit of giving traditionally associated with Christmas. In fact, while the people of the North River district continued to go out on the last night of the year, the people of the North shore actually practised Oidhche Na Calluin on Christmas Eve. Our*thanks to many people who helped us gather this story: Rosemary Hutchenson and John Alex MacPherson of Sydney who translated the poem; Annie May and Malcolm Angus MacLeod of Birch Plains, who supplied a copy of the poem in Gaelic; Donald G. Mac? Donald of North River; Roderick MacLeod and Sandy Kenny Morrison of Wreck Cove; and especially Tominy Peggy MacDonald of Breton Cove, who took time out from caulking his boat to sit down in the rain and first tell us the story of Oidhche Na Calluin, A B A D A K We can't remember when our first postmaster, John A. Campbell, walked from Baddeck to Sydney with the local mail. The rate was four cents a letter and often he had but one letter in his canvas bag. But the mail always arrived on time and the pay was adequate for then. Many of us do remember when a 60 amp electrical service gave plenty of power to run a few light bulbs, the radio and the new electric iron. We



don't walk the mail to Sydney any? more; and if we're wise we don't try to run our houseful of appliances on a 20-year-old electrical system. If you have any questions about the capacity of your electrical system, contact us. Baddeck Hardware & Electrical Store 295-2507, BADDECK CHICKEN CHALET fried 4 outlets to serve you- Blowers St, North Sydney Sydney Shopping Centre, Prince St Sterling Road, Glace Bay CB. Shopping Plaza, Sydney River 794-3534 564-6322 849-6689 564-6646 Cape Breton's Magazine//