



## Museum of Fire

### Articles on Historic Firefighting Equipment

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## Cleikes of Iron

The two Cleikes or Hooks which hang in the Museum of Fire may be five or six hundred years old. The larger of the two with the spike at the back is a little more than 30 feet long and weighs three-quarters of a hundredweight\*, while the shorter one is over 14 feet long and weighs one-quarter of a hundredweight. Hooks for similar purposes were used in olden days in other parts of the country and the continent.

They were sometimes called 'thatch hooks' and varied in length from seven feet long and upwards. They also varied in weight. As to length, it is difficult to tell whether there was any standard, as the wooden shafts of the smaller ones may have been cut or shortened. Some of the shorter ones had rings fixed to the shafts so that ropes or chains could be attached and tugged by helping hands once the hook had got its grip.

As well as dragging down burning roofs and thatch they were also used to scatter burning stacks. In 1929 these two Cleikes were found in a dungeon in Edinburgh Castle and were acquired by the North British and Mercantile Insurance Company Ltd., and were displayed in their offices at 64 Princes Street, Edinburgh until the building was demolished. They were then presented to the Museum of Fire and during a test held at Lauriston it was found that it required six Firefighters to operate the Cleikes.

\* Hundredweight: a British unit of weight equal to 112 pounds (50.802 kg)

