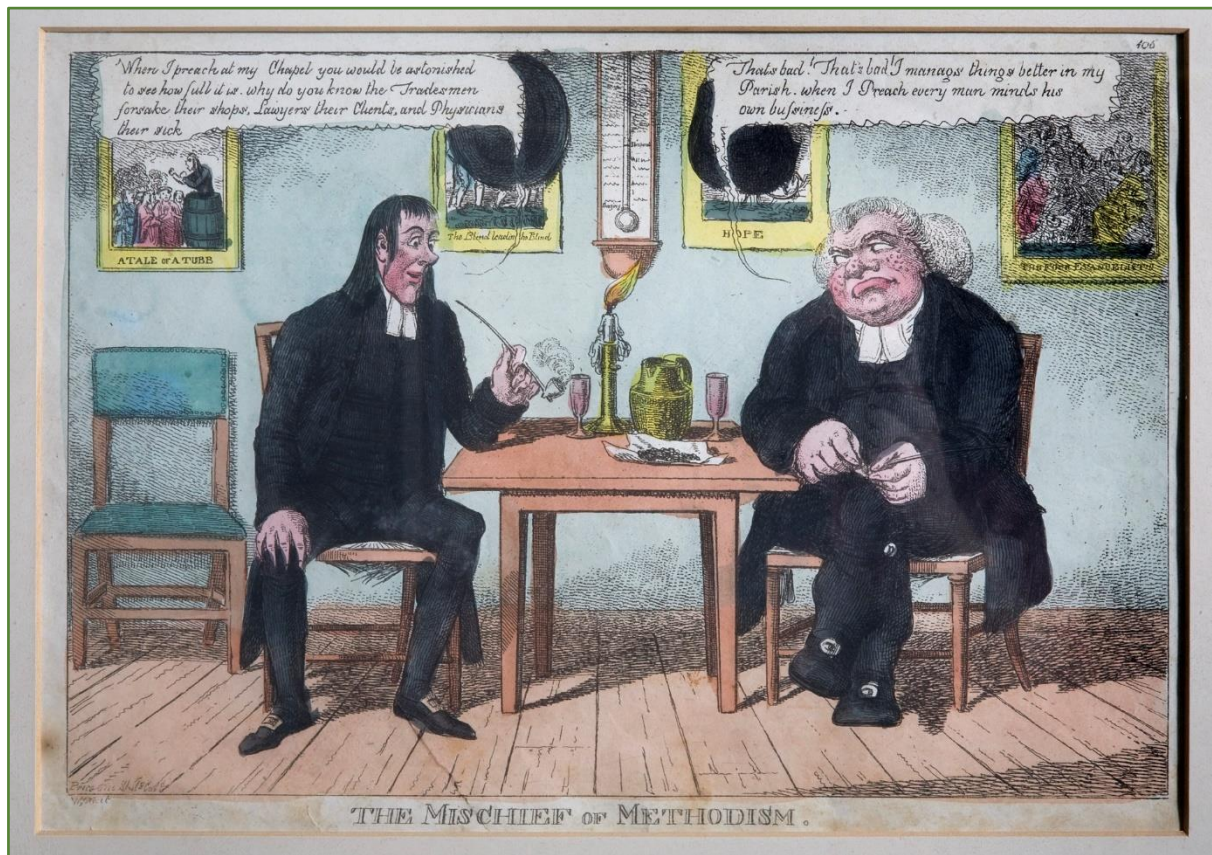


Curator's Picks

Our Curator has picked two of his favourite objects from The Museum of Methodism & John Wesley's House to share with visitors; an 18th century cartoon and a 'vertebra preacher'

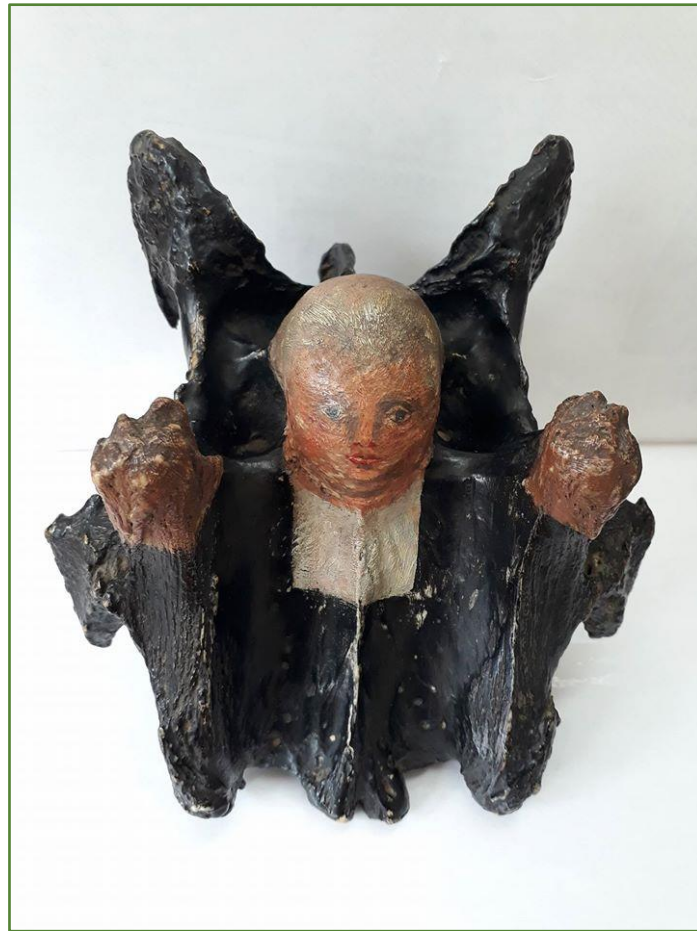
'The Mischief of Methodism'



This satirical etching (a type of print) was first published in Thomas Rowlandson's popular Caricature Magazine, or 'Hudabristic Mirror', in 1811. The magazine was published in London and observed and poked fun at the eccentricities of Georgian society.

The print satirizes two stereotypical preachers of the time: a slender Methodist - somewhat reminiscent of a young John Wesley - whose popularity in the pulpit causes the listeners at his chapel to neglect their daily obligations. The other, a rotund Anglican parish priest whose sermons are uninspiring and attract no attention or following at all. By implication, both churchmen were harmful to their flock and no good!

Vertebra Preacher



This curious object, a 'vertebra preacher', is made from the bone vertebra of a cow, oxen, or horse. It depicts a preaching clergyman, possibly John Wesley, and is a piece of folk art. It dates between 1750 and 1830.

Although unusual, this piece is not unique. There are three similar vertebra preacher statuettes in the Collection at Wesley's Chapel, and occasionally one comes across them in museums and private collections. The material, colouring and the bone 'wings' at the back make these small statues appear sombre, even a little scary.

The original purpose of these preacher vertebrae is unclear. They may have been purely decorative, but it is possible that the material itself and pose of the preacher may have been intended as a reminder to lead a virtuous life.