

Gough Island Mail Bag Tags & Labels

Unusual Items



A Study by Richard Moss

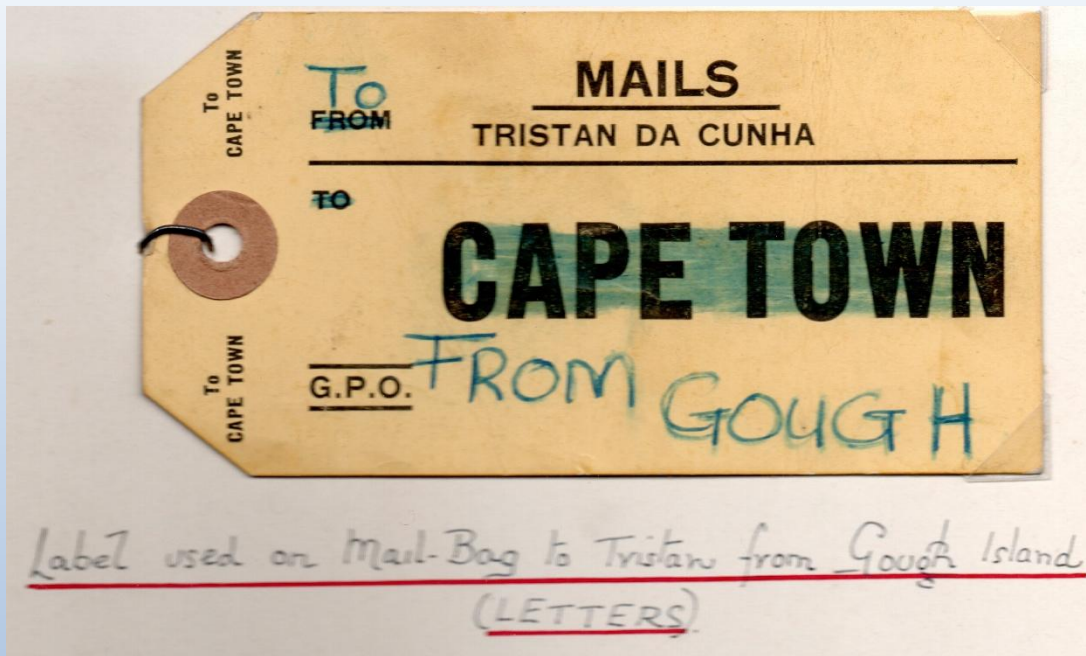
Extracts from the Magpie Auction Catalogue, 17th Apr 2025

488. TRISTAN DA CUNHA – GPO mailbag label adapted to read for mails to Tristan da Cunha from Gough Island Res £30
489. TRISTAN DA CUNHA – GPO parcel post bag label for mail from Tristan da Cunha to Gough Island. String at left is sealed by Tristan mailbag lead seal Res £35
490. TRISTAN DA CUNHA – GPO mailbag label adapted for use for mails from Tristan from Gough Island. String at left is sealed by Tristan mailbag lead seal (all are Cape Town mailbag labels adapted for their new usage) Res £35

The description was quite vague **BUT**

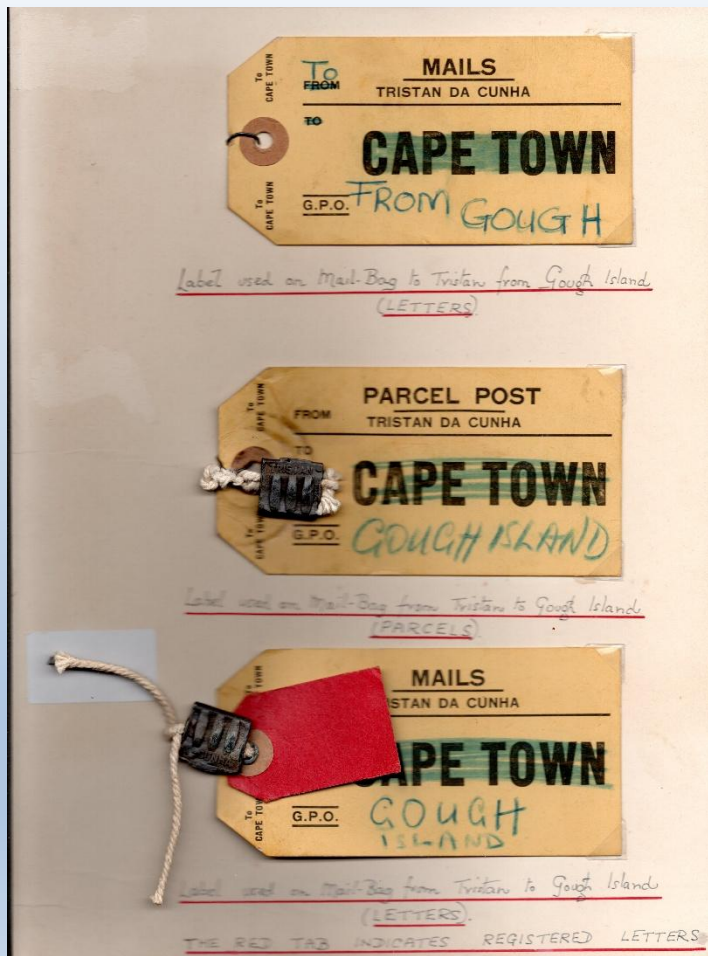
In 2017 I had seen and photographed a similar item, still in the hands of the original owner.

Write Up by a Pre 2014 Owner



As you can see, the write up gives no idea of the age or origin of the labels

I Managed to Purchase All Three Lots



It is surprising that a write up detailing the purpose of the red tag does not mention its source or original use.

Further enquiries show that other collectors and auctioneers who have handled them also did not know their source.

So, lets go back to 2017 and see what I've been able to add to the description.

Photographed on 15th May 2017, These are NOT the Same Labels.



Enlarged Photos of this lead tag are shown on the next slide

The Tags, Front & Rear Views



Tags, 'TRISTAN' on one side,
DA CUNHA on the other.



They still belonged to the original retriever, Michael Swales, the ornithologist on the Gough Island Expedition Team which operated the Gough Island Post Office from 14th Dec 1955 to 12th May 1956

There is no doubt that his items and the identical ones purchased in the Magpie auction were all used during the period Dec 1955 to 27th May 1957 when the office closed.

Michael Swales 1930-2024

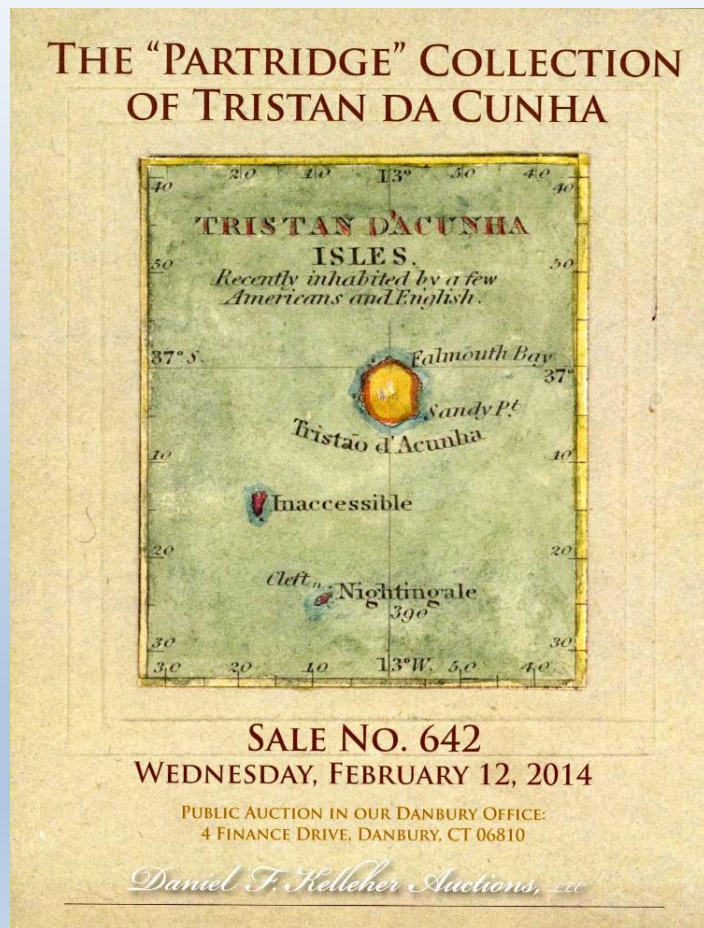


Michael, far right on back row, passed away on 22nd Dec 2024, having given a lifetime of service to Tristan.

(Taken off Gough Is, 12th Feb 2006)

In an ironic twist, on 17th Mar 2025, 7 DAYS before I heard about the items in the Magpie auction, I was at his house, helping (in vain) the executors to locate these and other philatelic items.

What Do We Know of the Philatelic History of My Seals & Tags

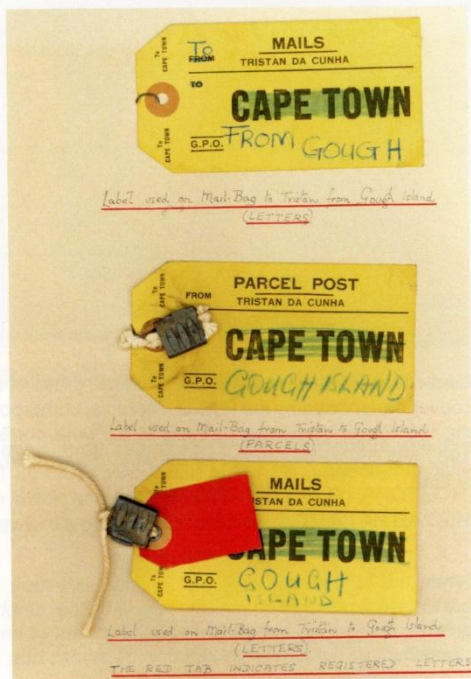


The earliest recorded to date is in
this Kelleher Auction Catalogue.

They describe the 'Partridge'
collection as the combination of
two important collections.

The Kelleher Catalogue Entry & History

Ephemera



What we do know.

The previous owner states that they were bought, for \$502-00, by Robin Taylor, the leading U.K. based Tristan specialist.

Robin sold them to him just before his death in 2018.

Note that back in 2014 the true source of these was not noted in the catalogue description.

Further research starts here!

287

Tags used on mailbags to Tristan da Cunha from Gough Island, three similar items; comprising one for sack of regular letters, other for a sack of registered letters, and exhibiting a red tab, plus tag for a sack of parcels, two items with security clips made from a soft metal, interesting and rarely offered (more photos on web site).

Estimate \$750 - 1,000

Thank You for watching.