

# Australia

## Letter cards – stamped to order

### Synopsis

This exhibit showcases STO letter cards impressed under the relevant postal regulations, from 1915 to 1930. While records show that cards were embossed with a 2d oval indicium until 1933, none has been discovered. Only one complete used card has been found to date, which is shown.

### Treatment

Some 130,000 cards were produced, but only about 30 complete cards are recorded – a survival rate of about 0.02%! Due to the rarity of these cards, it has not been feasible to collect every known card/indiciu combination. The methodology of this exhibit is to show examples from all four known users, each of the known views used by Reid Bros and at least one example of the known indicia utilised. Some examples are only known as incomplete cards (and noted as such). The exhibit shows about half of all recorded complete cards, including several that are unique. Illustrations are mainly at 75% (and shaded) to distinguish them from their original.

### Philatelic importance

The difficulty of manufacturing letter cards was not well understood by businesses and private printers during their periods of use. While the postal regulations provided for the stamping of private letter cards from 1906, the first order was not processed by the Printer (then J B Cooke) until 1915. As Australia was at war, there was difficulty in procuring suitable board (colour and thickness) and gumming and perforating them. The Victorian and Commonwealth Printers had perfected the process of their production over many years and had secured their lines of supply. The decision to initially issue the Commonwealth letter card at 'face value' lead to their immediate popularity and Cooke had great difficulty keeping up with the demand. He was not enthusiastic about helping the private sector use his product or assisting it to manufacture their own cards.

Surprisingly, despite the effort and the obvious cost involved in having private letter cards manufactured and impressed, (increasingly so from 1917, when a stamping fee of 2s per 1,000 applied), the majority were folded and mailed under cover to customers and suppliers – to be returned to the sender – thereby negating the obvious effort taken by Reid Bros and W H Burford & Sons in the production of their cards. In fact, the only examples of these users (and J Kitchen & Sons) are unused cards that were retained by the

recipient and found their way into the hands of collectors. These letter cards, like STO reply post cards and registered envelopes - make up the crème de la crème of Australian postal stationery.

There is archival evidence that the printer uprated letter cards with a ½d impression following the introduction of war postage in October 1918. It is likely that most, if not all such impressions, were made on Post Office and not on previously STO cards. No example is recorded.

### Exhibit Plan

- Development of STO letter cards
- KGV side face electros surface printed
  - 1d red (Reid Bros)
  - 1½d brown shades (Reid Bros & W H Burford & Sons)
- KGV 'Wilby' design embossed
  - 1½d brown shades
    - Die 2 (W H Burford & Sons)
    - Die 3 (Wm Adams)
  - 2d orange (Reid Bros)
  - 2d red with POSTAGE (Reid Bros)
  - 1½d green with POSTAGE (Reid Bros)
  - 1½d red with POSTAGE (Reid Bos, W H Burford & Sons, J Kitchen & Sons)
- KGV oval embossed
  - 1½d red (Reid Bros)

### Research

The exhibit relies heavily on the exhibitor's article 'Stamped-to-order letter cards of Australia' in *Philately from Australia*, June 2007, pp 36 to 58, Brusden White's *Australian Commonwealth Specialist's Catalogue - Postal Stationery*, 2nd Edition (ACSC) and personal research carried out at the National Archives of Australia and the Reserve Bank of Australia.

### Embossed die identification

'Wilby' design



Die 2

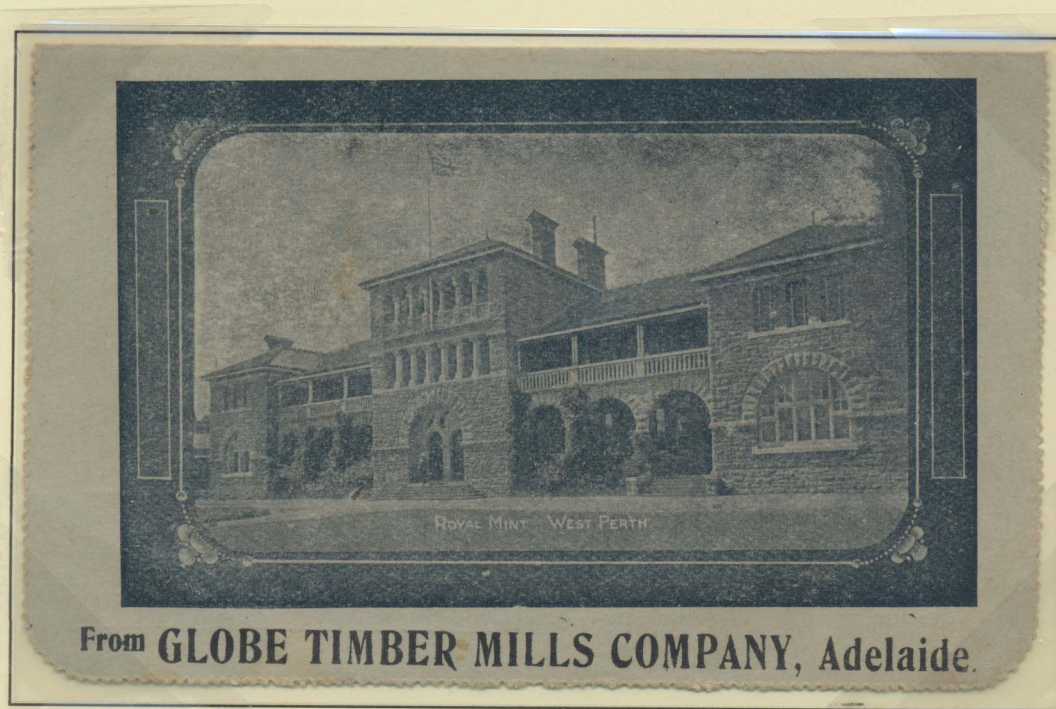


Die 3



## Development of STO letter cards

The issue of STO letter cards had a long and difficult gestation. An attempt in May 1911 by the Petersburg Times to purchase 5,000 Post Office cards without printing on the back was rejected by JB Cooke due to "pressure of work". Shortly afterwards, the Globe Timber Mills Company, Adelaide made a similar request, also without success. This time due to 'Departmental policy'. Globe responded by printing on letter cards purchased from the Post Office. Reid Bros began their quest for the stamping of cards in October 1914. Their request complied with the regulations and did not seek to use the Post Office issued cards, as had the previous requests. This was the first request for a genuine STO card since the introduction of regulations for their stamping in 1906. Initially, there was no impressing fee.



The Globe printing can be found on 1d Full face, Kangaroo and KGV Post Office cards. This card is a KGV issue.

ADELAIDE and PORT ADELAIDE.		Ton, 20 cwt., Tons, 40 cwt. Load, 1000 weight, Measure 1
Deals	as S & S	536
Flooring	" " 6 x 11	1,557
	" " 6 x 11	1,750
	" " 6 x 11	2,000
	" " 6 x 11	2,300
Matchboards	5 x 11	2,800
	" " 6 x 11	3,000
	" " 6 x 11	4,800
Weatherboards (Single)	" " 6 x 11	3,100
	" " 6 x 11	450
V.O.L. Hardwood	No. of super feet in	450
Jarrah	" "	450
Shedding (American) L & S	" "	1,600
6 feet Transverse Palings (Hobart)	No. to	600
" "	" "	400
" "	" "	400
" "	" "	400
" "	" "	400
Spruce Deals as S & S	No. of running feet to	400
Kauri	" "	400
Cedar	No. of super feet to	400
Glass Pine	" "	900
Doors, 6 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. 6 in. x 1 1/2	No. to ten	55
" 6 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. 6 in. x 1 1/2	" "	70
" 6 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. 6 in. x 1 1/2	" "	80
" 6 ft. 6 in. x 7 ft. 6 in. x 1 1/2	" "	75
Cement	No. of Casks to ton	54
Plaster of Paris	" "	71

The following List shows the Average Number of Sheds of Galvanized Iron to be Ten.

% GAUGE	5 Ft. 6 In.	7 Ft. 6 In.	8 Ft. 6 In.	9 Ft. 6 In.	10 Ft.
24 GAUGE	106	106	108	110	116
24 GAUGE	102	128	118	101	90
24 GAUGE	108	122	106	106	118

(4470)  
 Telephone  
 (4471)  
 (4472)

107  
 FLINDERS STREET  
 Adelaide  
 Your order of 14d inst.  
 V.D.L.

107

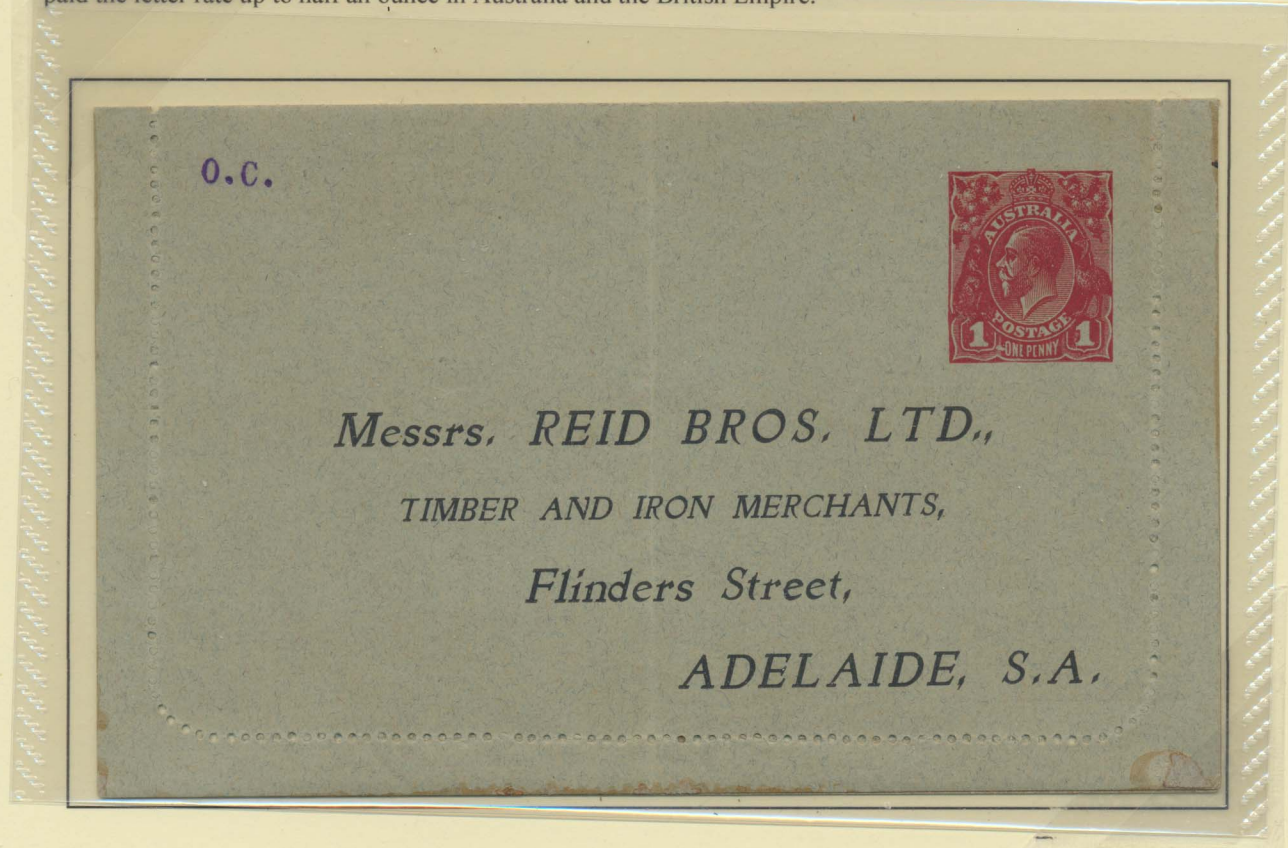
received, for which accept our thanks. We will give same our immediate attention, and will forward as soon as possible. Yours faithfully,  
 GLOBE TIMBER MILLS CO.,  
 1st

Illustration of the printing on the inside of the card. The Globe card was produced to forward to customers, unlike those of Reid Bros and WH Burford & Sons.

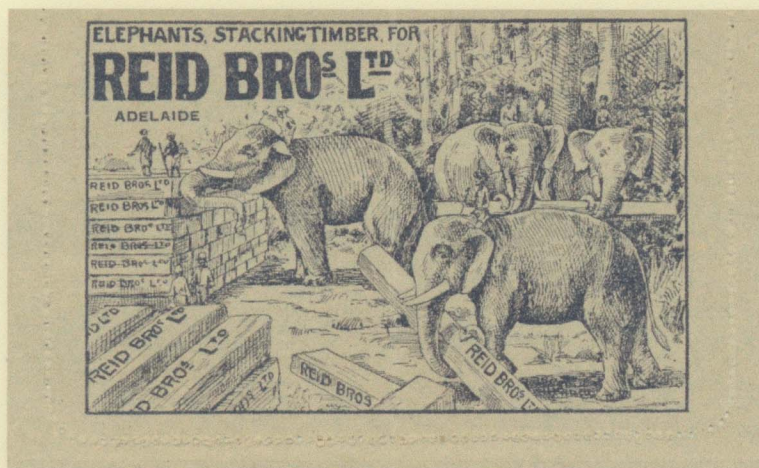


Surface printed KGV side face electros  
1d red

Archival information indicates that the issue of the surface printed cards using KGV electros was likely done in sheets of 12, like the Post Office issues. They were also perforated in like manner to the Post Office cards. It is not clear if they might have initially also been gummed by the Printer. However, J B Cooke is known to have protested against gumming, as he only had one gumming machine and the production of Post office cards was at capacity. The later embossed cards were definitely neither perforated nor gummed by the Printer and show great variety between users in this regard. All known Reid Bros cards are folded in half as they were sent to customers under cover. One penny paid the letter rate up to half an ounce in Australia and the British Empire.



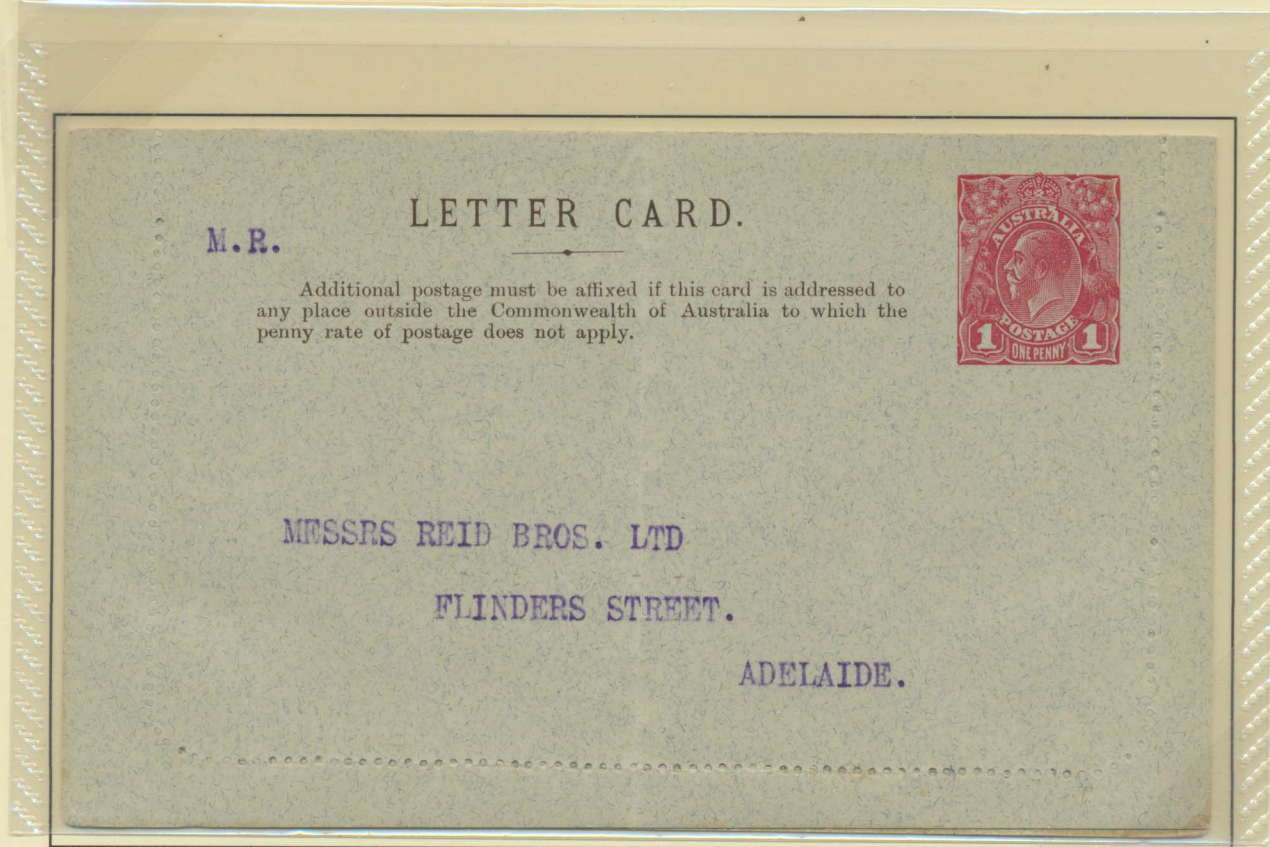
This is thought to be the first type of card STO because it has no heading and is perforated in like manner to the Commonwealth issued cards. The first cards were STO during late March 1915. Illustration of the scene which is listed as (1) in the ACSC. Two examples recorded. Only Reid Bros had scenes.



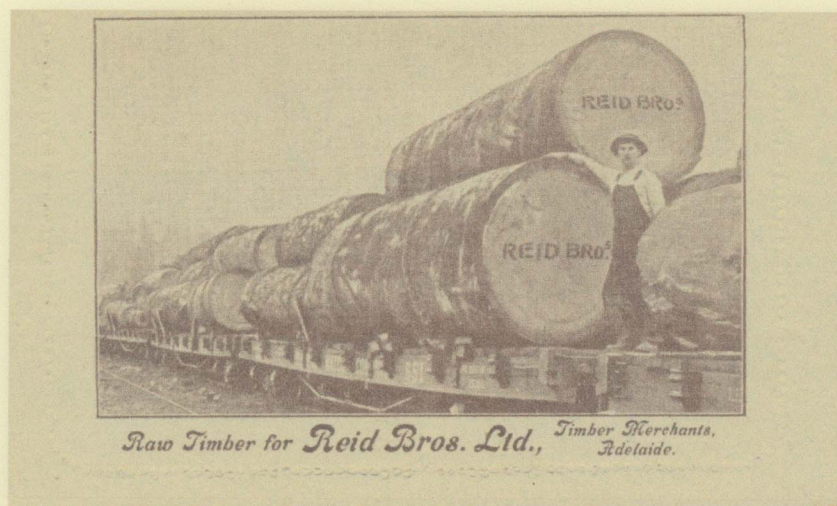


## Surface printed KGV side face electros 1d red

Records indicate 36,699 cards were stamped in 18 orders from March 1915 to July 1918. The largest order was for 6,974 cards in September 1915. The smallest order was for 60 in the same month and may indicate the forwarding of cards to make up other orders. All 1d cards were sent to South Australia. No 1d WH Burford & Sons card is known.



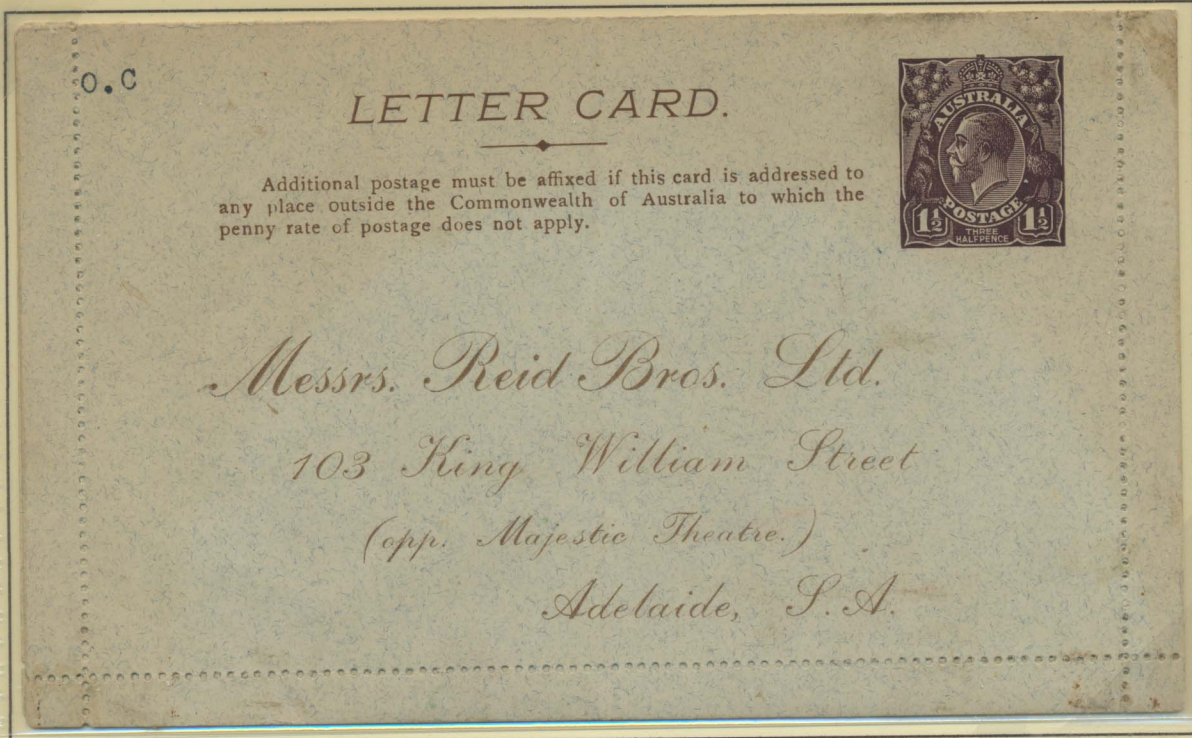
This card now has a heading like the Post Office issue but with no printed address like the first example shown. With the title 'Raw Timber for Reid Bros Ltd., Timber Merchants Adelaide' and a worker in a protective apron on the flat car on the back. This is ACSC scene (2), illustrated below. This illustration was also used on the next card shown. This example is the only 1d recorded with this scene.





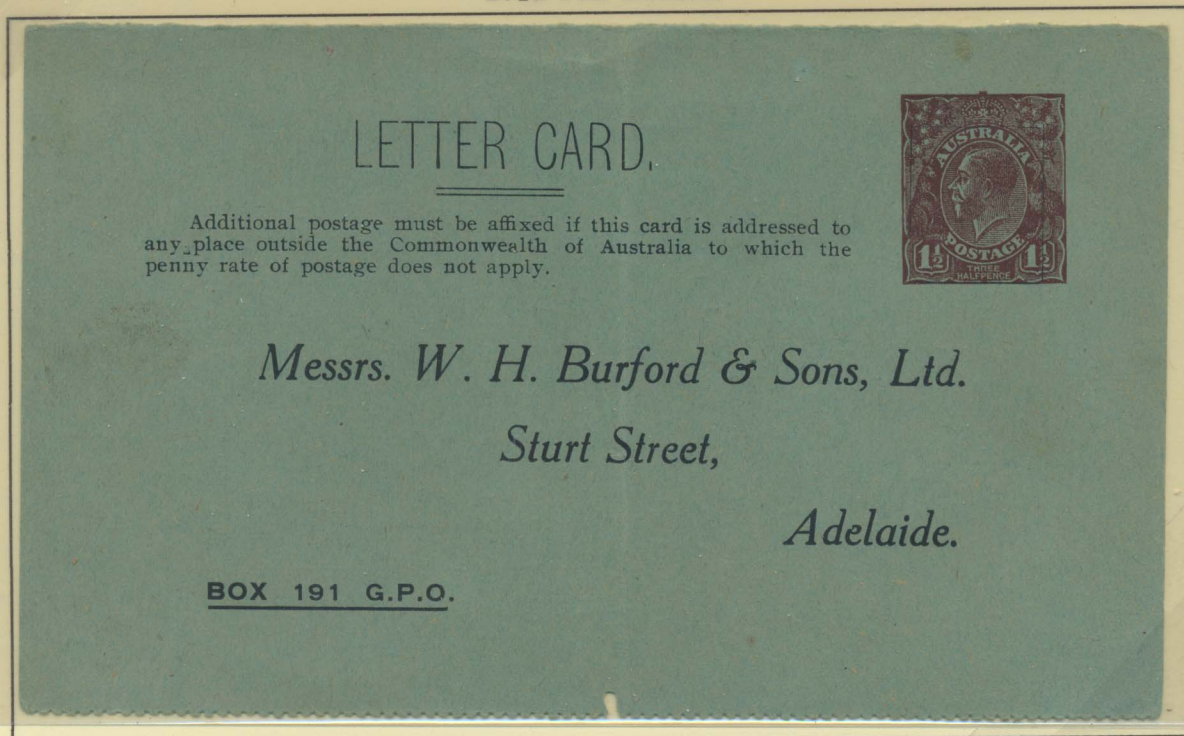
Surface printed KGV side face 1½d electros

1½d brown



Only one Reid Bros 1½d card is recorded printed with the KGV electro (in brown), suggesting it was stamped shortly after the introduction of ½d war postage on 28 Oct 1918. The first 1½d stamping was on 6 Nov 1918. This card has the same view as the earlier 1d KGV red issue – ACSC (2). This card now has squared perforations at the corners. From this time the Reid Bros cards no longer have rounded corners and 'LETTER CARD' is in a different font.

1½d red brown

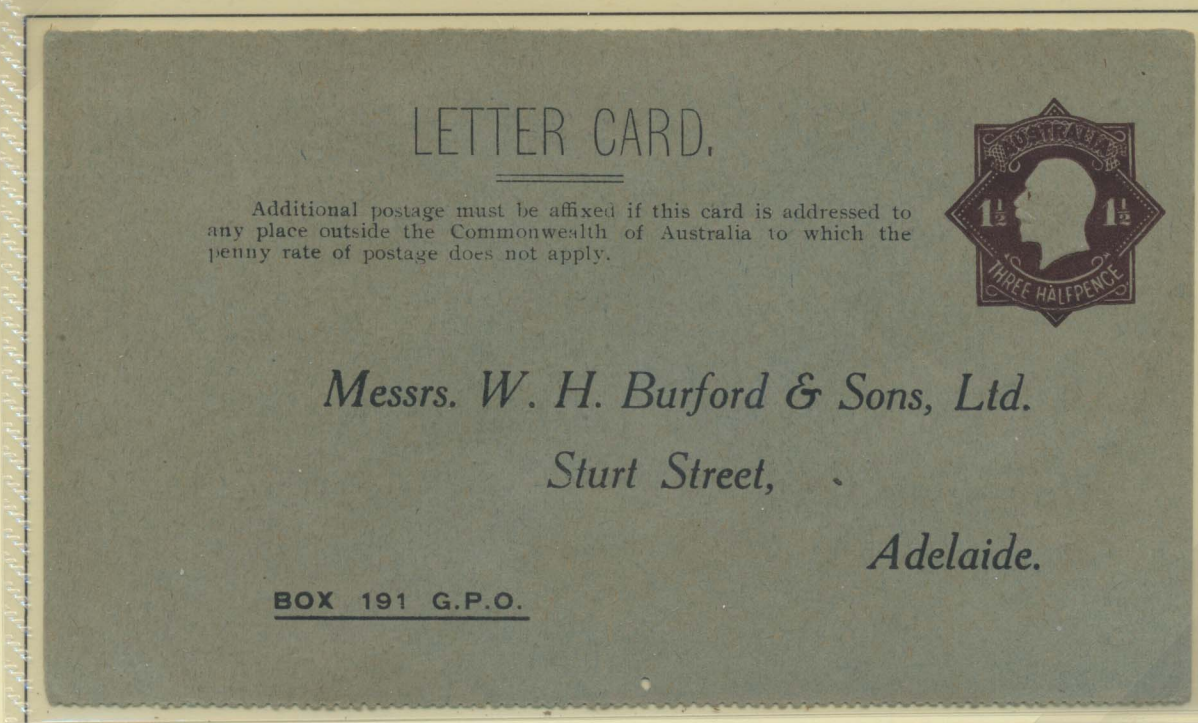


Front half of card only. This is the first recorded card for WH Burford & Sons. The Burford cards contained pre-printed advice of manufacturing ingredients sent to it by rail or other means by the sender of the card. Like Reid Bros cards, their survival is likely due to not being returned to Burfords by its supplier, or in the case of Reid Bros, by its customer. About five of these 'fronts' have survived. The ACSC states that there was nothing printed on the back of this issue. However, this needs to be verified.



**Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
1½d die 2 brown**

It is not known when in 1919 Harrison no longer impressed the cards with an electro and embossed them. As embossing was done singly, the cards would have had to have been guillotined into individual cards. Eight orders were fulfilled totalling 20,798 cards (surface printed and embossed) between November 1918 and August 1920.



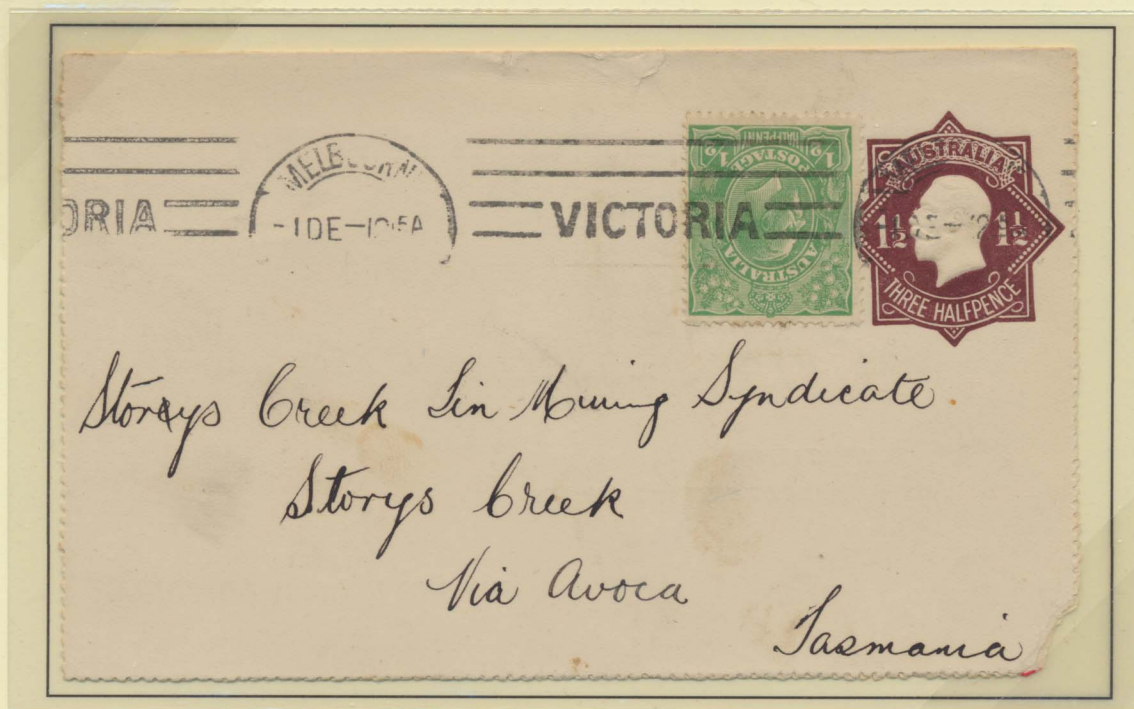
'Front' missing the perforated strip at the bottom and only recorded use of the 1½d 'Wilby' die 2 on a letter card.



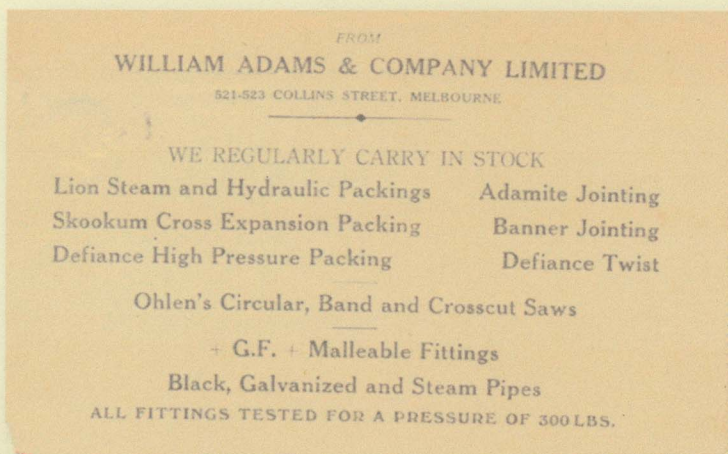
This example shows the back of a card embossed with the 1½d red 'Wilby' indicium. This particular example shows a mis-guillotining of the card on the printed sheet before cutting. The words 'BURFORDS-QUALITY' should appear in full at the right side of the card. It is not yet known when the printing on the back was added to Burford's cards, as the early known Burford's examples are 'fronts'.



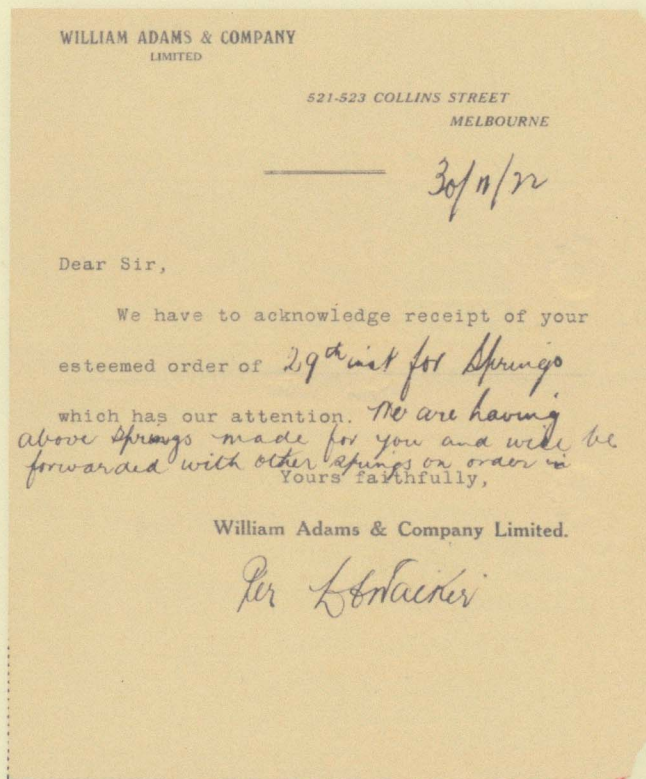
Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
1½d die 3 red brown



The records do not show any 1½d cards issued to Victoria and the number printed may have been entered under 'post cards' in the production records. This is the only complete used card and the only card for Wm Adams recorded. Wm Adams are known to have subsequently used 2d orange Post Office cards (with additional printing in the inside) for the same purpose. There was no requirement for a private letter card to have any heading or admonition on it, despite these appearing on Reid Bros and W H Burford & Sons cards.



Above Illustration of the back.  
Right Illustration of the inside of the card.

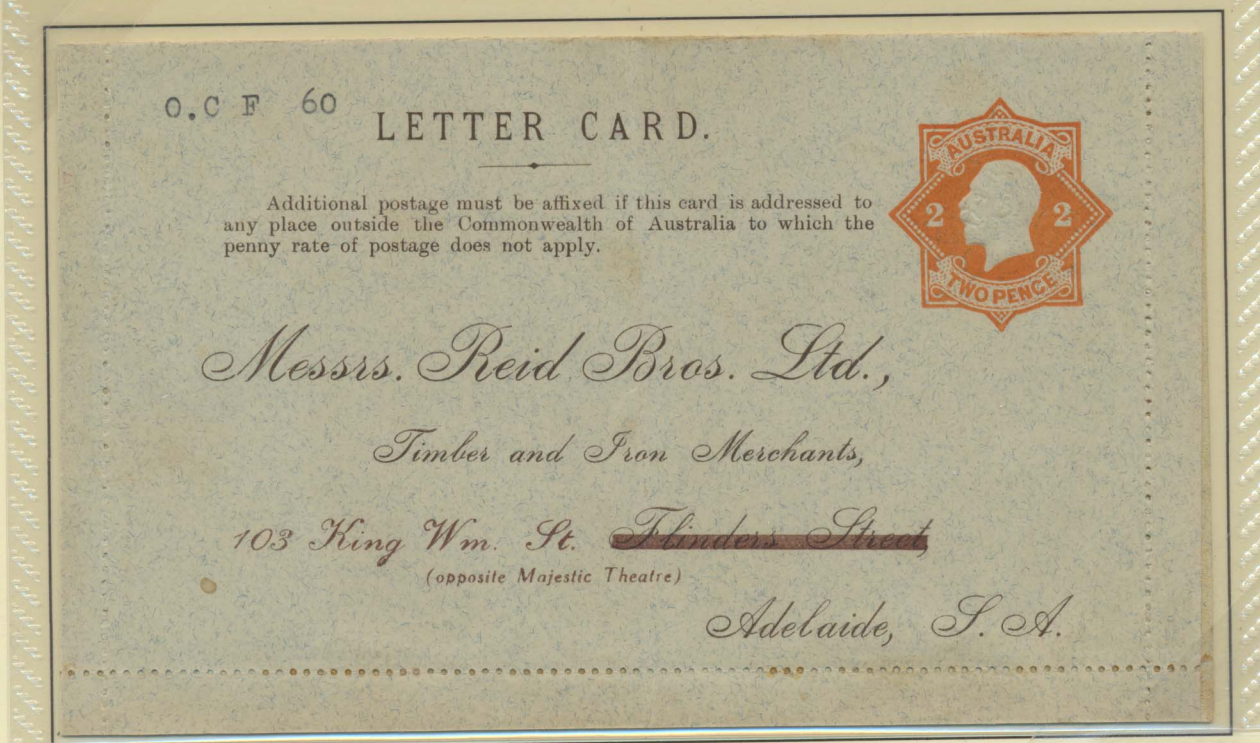




## Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design 2d orange

On 1 October 1920, the *Post and Telegraph Rates Act 1920* removed War Postage and increased the rate of postage to 2d per half ounce. As the new adhesive stamp was orange and so too was the embossed impression.

The typewritten 'code' on Reid Bros cards is not yet understood. Most of the Reid Bros cards have such a code which makes each card clearly identifiable. Thankfully, collectors have a debt of gratitude to 'OC' whoever or whatever that is. Many of the Reid Bros cards have an 'OC' code.



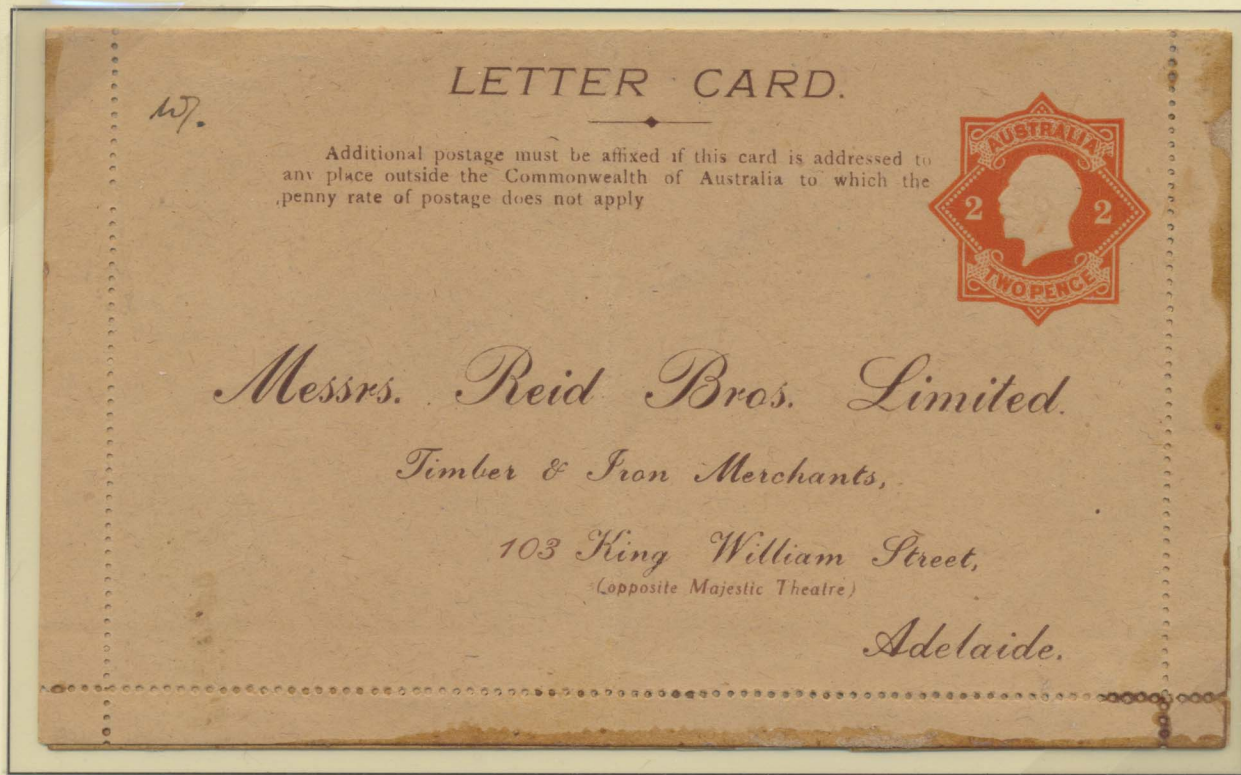
Embossed with the 2d orange 'Wilby' indicium, one of only two 2d orange cards recorded. This card is printed on the same 'granite' stock as earlier Reid Bros cards (with much variation in thickness and colour) up to this time. The back scene (illustrated below) is ACSC (3) and is the same scene as was used on one of the earlier Reid Bros cards impressed with the 1d red KGV electro.



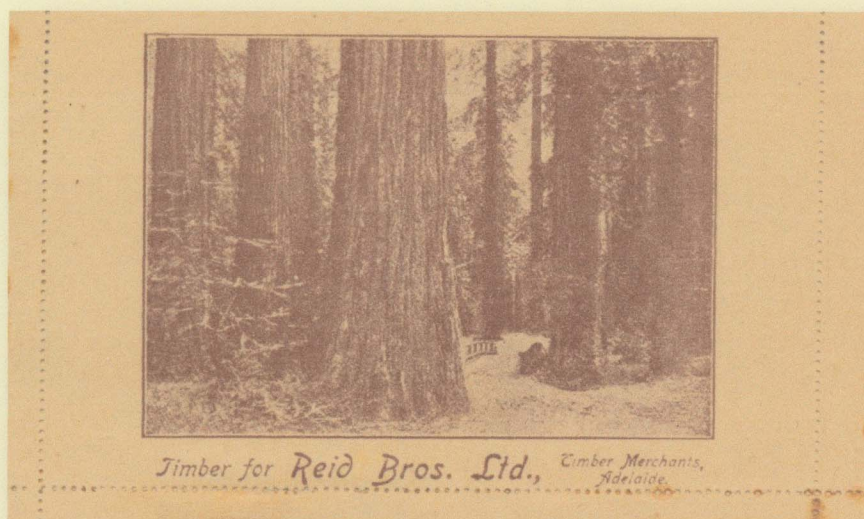


## Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design 2d orange

This card, with Reid Bros' new address and card stock was used after the preceding card, which has an amended address and is on the previous 'granite' stock. The heading 'LETTER CARD' reverts to the one used on the 1½d values Reid Bros cards. Four orders for letter cards were embossed between December 1920 and August 1921. The next order for embossing was in January 1922, when the colour of the 2d was changed to red. Thus, no 2d orange with 'POSTAGE' cards should exist. A total of 9,082 cards were embossed.



This is only the second card recorded embossed with the 2d orange indicium. The scene illustrated below, while captioned 'Timber for Reid Bros Ltd., Timber Merchants Adelaide.' is that of a redwood forest. It is listed in the ACSC as scene (5). The scene also shows a road and small bridge.





**Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
2d red with POSTAGE**

From October 1921, the Printer was embossing orders with a die that now include 'POSTAGE'. No orders for letter cards had been received after that date until January 1922, when Australia implemented the decision that had been taken at the 1920 UPU Congress at Madrid. As a result, 2d the letter rate stamp was changed to red.



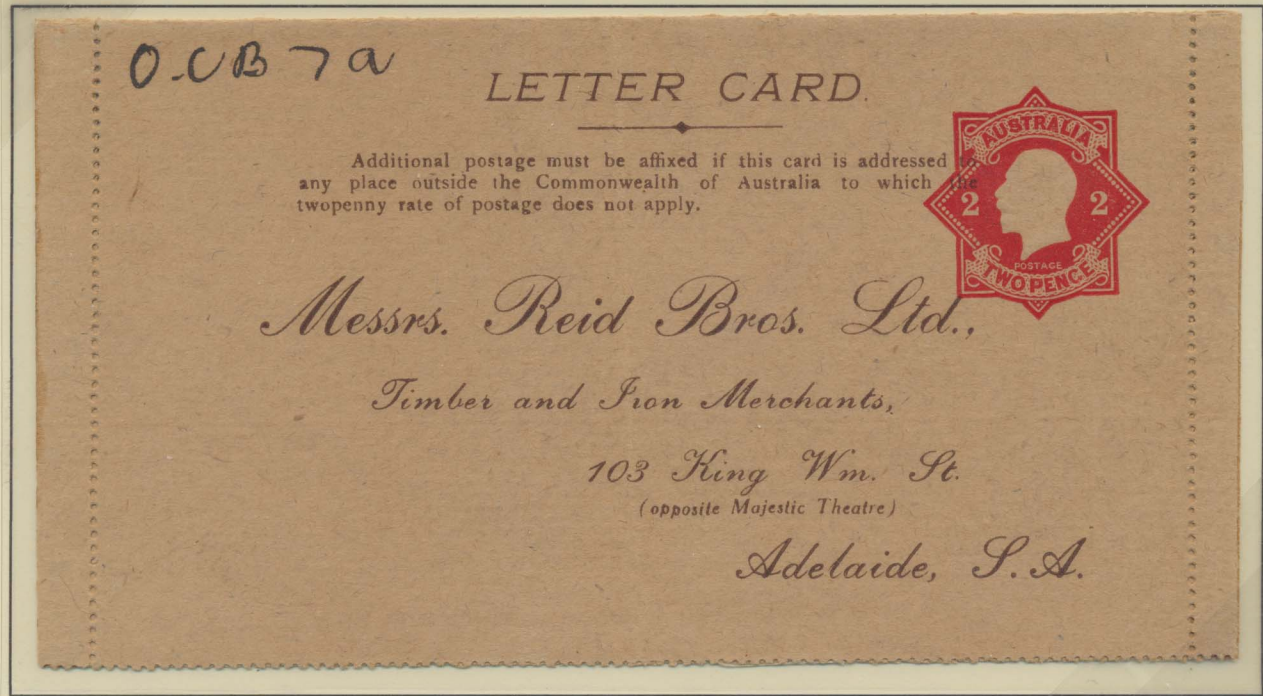
This is one of two cards recorded embossed with the 2d red indicium. The back scene (illustrated below) is ACSC (4) and is also recorded used on an issue of the card impressed with the 1d red KGV indicium.





**Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
2d red with POSTAGE**

Six orders for 2d letter cards were embossed from January 1922 to June 1923, totalling 8,993 cards. The number given in the ACSC is a mistake.



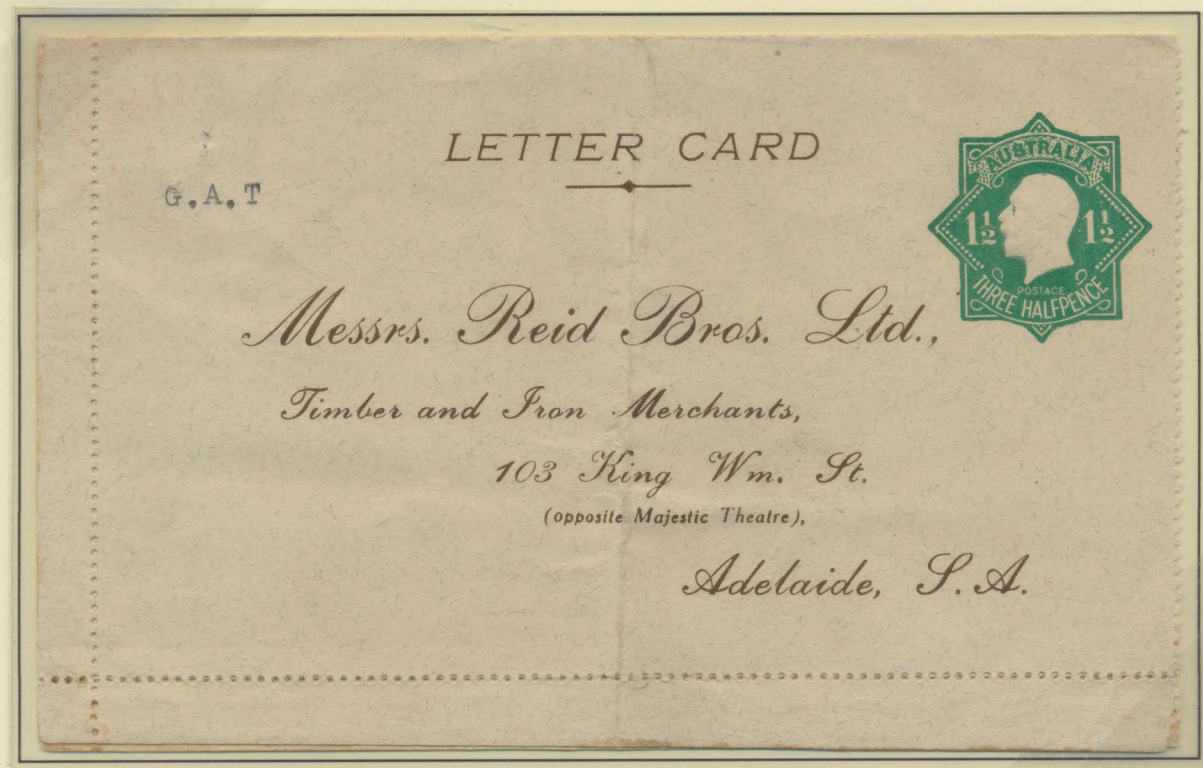
Bottom selvedge missing. This is only the second card recorded embossed with the 2d red indicium. The back scene illustrated below, is the only one recorded with ACSC scene (6) – 'Eucalypt forest'.





**Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
1½d green with POSTAGE**

The *Post and Telegraph Rates Act* 1923 reduced the rates of postage on postal articles from 1 October 1923 and the new letter rate became 1½d per ounce. The existing 1½d adhesive stamp colour had been emerald green since March or April 1923. One order for STO cards was received in October 1923 and two in February 1924, totalling 4,592 cards. The admonition has been removed and the paper a thin granite type.



This is the only card recorded embossed with the 1½d emerald green indicium. The scene is the same as that used on the earlier 2d orange card ('W/.'), which is, ACSC scene (5) and is illustrated below,





**Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design**  
**1½d red with POSTAGE for W H Burford & Sons**

LETTER CARD.



*Messrs. W. H. Burford & Sons, Ltd.,*  
*Sturt Street,*  
*Adelaide.*

BOX 191 G.P.O.

This card is 142x97mm.  
 An example of the back  
 of the card was shown  
 on page 6 of this exhibit  
 with the embossed  
 KGV 1½d die 2 'front'.

*Below showing the  
 inside printing of this  
 card.*

**The Best Quality. BURFORD'S The Best Value.**

192

BURFORD'S "SIGNAL" SOAP: Marvellously Quick & Safe.  
 BURFORD'S PRIZE No. 1 SOAP: The World's Best.  
 BURFORD'S SNOW WHITE NAPTHA SOAP.  
 BURFORD'S EXTRACT OF SOAP: 1lb. & Small Packets  
 BURFORD'S BORAX SOAP.

BURFORD'S HIGH CLASS TOILET SOAPS:

Wattle Blossom, White Violet, Carnation, Wallflower  
 Sweet Pea, Sweet Briar, Oriental Bouquet, New Violet,  
 Wistaria, Castile Soap, Bath Soap (large and small), Shaving  
 Soap (Tablet, Cream, and Stick).

BURFORD'S No. 63 CARBOLIC SOAP

BURFORD'S EXHIBITION CANDLES: The Best.

BURFORD'S BEDROOM CANDLES.

BURFORD'S PIANO CANDLES.

BURFORD'S No. 1 STARCH: In 1 lb. Boxes.

BURFORD'S COLOURED STARCH:

Ecru, Pink, Heliotrope, Blue, Cream, and Green.

BURFORD'S LINEN ENAMEL

BURFORD'S "SIGNAL" BOOT AND HARNESS  
 POLISHES: Black and Tan.

BURFORD'S LINOLEUM POLISH:

This is also a Splendid Furniture Polish.

BURFORD'S "MAGIC" BRUNSWICK BLACK.

BURFORD'S "HUB" BRAND AXLE GREASE.

Dark and Yellow

BURFORD'S HARVESTING MACHINERY OILS

BURFORD'S BINDER OILS.

BURFORD'S "MAGIC" EGG PRESERVER.

BURFORD'S EPSOM SALTS. 1 lb. Packets & small packets

BURFORD'S SNOWFLAKES:

For Woollens, Silks, and Laces

BURFORD'S BATH SALTS.

We have this day forwarded from .....

addressed W. H. BURFORD & SONS, Ltd., per .....

TALLOW or FAT.	{	Tins .....	Bags .....
		Cases .....	Casks .....



Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
1½d red with POSTAGE for J Kitchen & Sons



**J. KITCHEN & SONS PTY. LTD.**

**Box 1590 B**

**G.P.O.**

**SYDNEY**

TO OPEN THE LETTER CARD, TEAR OFF THE EDGE AT THE PERFORATION

Two of these cards are recorded, each with different content inside.

The instructions about opening the card are like those added to Post Office cards from 1925.

The records indicate three orders of small numbers of cards to NSW from 1926 to 1928 totalling 1,878 cards. Most likely all for J Kitchen & Sons. These cards have no printing on the back. Like Reid Bros and W H Burford & Sons' cards, these appear to have been sent to customers under cover as they have a central fold.

**J. KITCHEN & SONS PTY. LTD.**

Waratah House, 365 Kent Street, Sydney

LIST OF MANUFACTURES

SIREN SOAP, LARGE BARS	42 TO CASE	MERINO
.. .. MEDIUM BARS	80 .. ..	KITCHEN'S EXTRACT, 1-LB. Pkts.
.. .. TABLETS	120 .. ..	VELVET BLUE
WITCH SOAP, 168's, 84's and 56's	.. ..	MAGPIE STOVE POLISH
WITCH-IPS, FOR THE COPPER		VELVET SHAVING STICK
SIREN SOAP POWDER, 4-OZ. Pkts.		TOILET SOAPS
ANCHOR SOAP, 52 BARS TO CASE		CANDLES
GOLDFINDER SOAP, VARIOUS SIZES		SODA CRYSTALS
LAUNDRY SOAPS, VARIOUS		OLEO, MARGARINE
SOLVOL SOAP TABLETS		
SOLVOL SOAP PASTE		

ORDER

Date

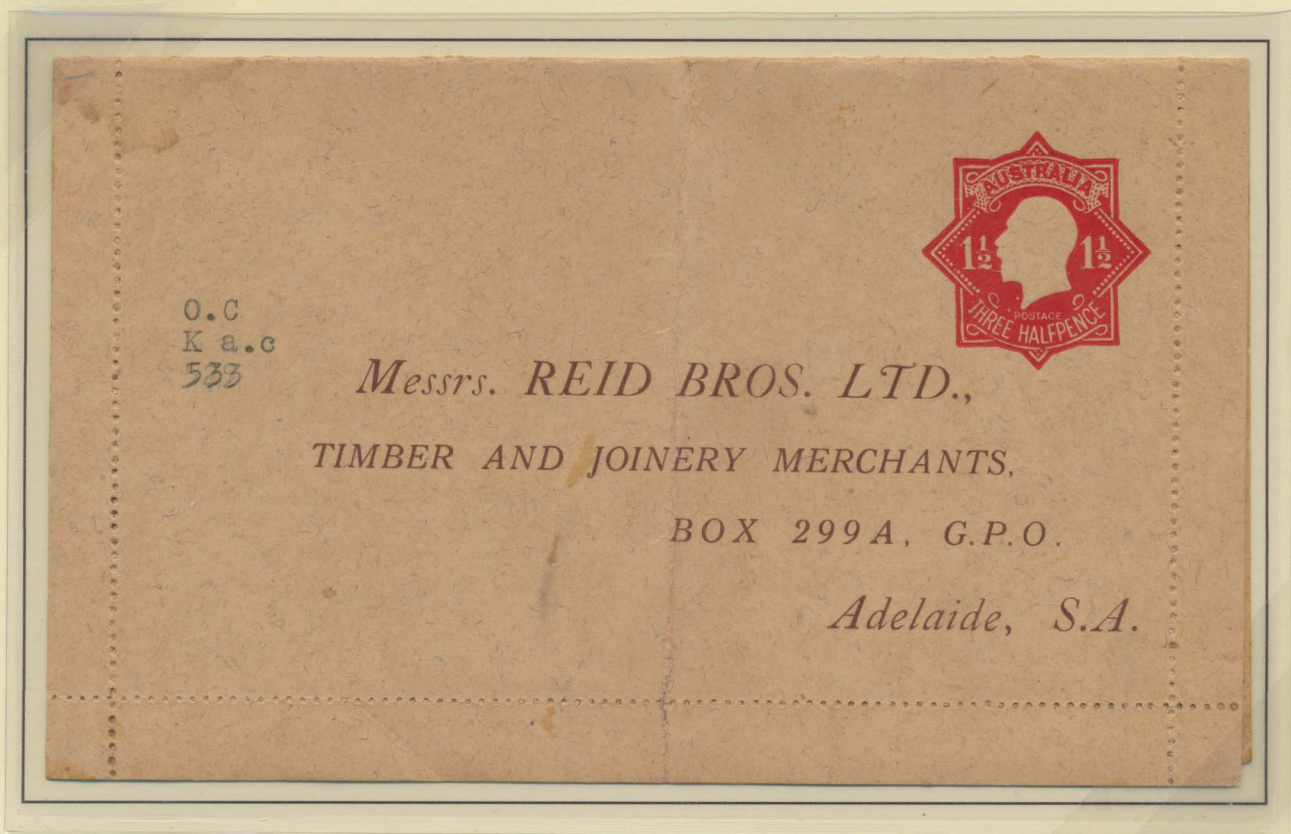
Please send per

Name

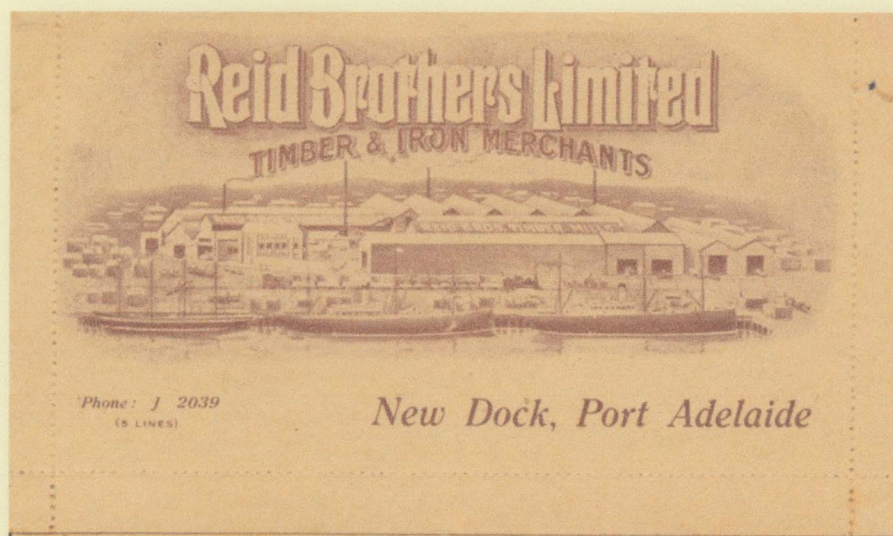
Address



Embossed KGV 'Wilby' design  
1½d red with POSTAGE for Reid Bros



This is the first Reid Bros card that uses the picture of its premises at New Dock, although archival information indicates that this scene may have been available for use from the time Reid Bros requested STO cards. However, it has not been recorded on any earlier card. The scene is in a mid brown shade without a full stop after 'Port Adelaide'. The ACSC does not allocate a number for this scene.





**Embossed  
KGV 'Oval'  
1½d red**

The oval design was introduced from Jan 1929. No records have been discovered about quantities embossed or for which sate. Clearly some were sent to South Australia.

WFC.

*Messrs. REID BROS. LTD.,*  
*TIMBER AND JOINERY MERCHANTS,*

*BOX 299 A, G.P.O.*

*Adelaide, S.A.*



Illustration of the back of 'WFC' card (above). No stop after Port Adelaide.



'Phone: J 2039  
(5 LINES)

*New Dock, Port Adelaide*

Back of 'EAK' card. Scene in mid brown and with full stop after Port Adelaide.



'Phone: J 2039  
(5 LINES)

*New Dock, Port Adelaide.*