BHS May 2021 Meeting
THE LEWIS FAMILY: FROM BURRA TO BENACRE & BEYOND

As a contribution to the State's Jubilee Celebrations in 1986, 23 members of the Burnside Historical Society researched the origins and meanings of the six hundred street names in the Burnside Council area. This major task was completed in 1989. **Ash Wright** joined the BHS in 2018 after submitting research about Ashley Avenue, Glen Osmond. His interest in the distinguished Lewis family was triggered when he discovered that it was highly likely that Ashley (his namesake) Avenue derived its name from the long-term owners of the former Benacre Estate namely the Lewis family.

Ash regaled the meeting with the fascinating story of the prominent South Australian Lewis family and its connection to the stately mansion known as Benacre.

James Lewis arrived in South Australia in 1838 on the *Rapid.* is wife Eliza arrived on the *Cygnet* in 1836. They married in Holy Trinity Church in 1841. Their first-born son, John Lewis, left home at 14 and went bush. He conducted pastoral, exploration, goldmining and trading operations in the Northern Territory. In 1876 he returned to South Australia and married Martha Anne Brook. They settled at Burra, where he formed a stock and station agency which later amalgamated with Goldsborough, Mort, & Co. Ltd. John had a distinguished career which included being a member of the Legislative Council, president of the Horticultural and Floricultural Society, a member of the Flora and Fauna Board and president of the South Australian branch of the Royal Geographical Society of Australasia.

The home in 1904 – SLSA B8384.

He was widowed in 1894 and in 1906 he moved to Adelaide where he bought Benacre, at Glen Osmond. The original single storeyed house was built by G.F. Shipster in 1844. In 1845, William Bickford purchased the property and in 1846 he added the stables and the coach house. Thomas Strangways then Thomas Graves were the next owners then in the mid-1870s Henry Scott, (Mayor of Adelaide) and his wife Emily, purchased the property and named it "Benacre".

John Lewis was the next owner. He died at Benacre in 1923. In 1924, his executors subdivided a portion of the property (part sections 270 and 271, Hundred of Adelaide) into 39 building blocks.

Lancelot Ashley Lewis, born at Burra, youngest son of John and Martha, purchased Benacre in 1924. He was a Norwood footballer and a major in the 3rd Light Horse Regiment serving at Gallipoli and in

Egypt. Lancelot died in 1938 and his wife Grace (Gretta) continued to live at Benacre until her death in 1968.

When listed for sale in 2012, Benacre was described as "*a two-storey bluestone Italianate Victorian Mansion, with sweeping verandahs, Corinthian porch, heavy parapet and elaborate urns. It is heritage listed as much for its historical importance to the state as for the beautiful building itself."*

Bronwyn Lewis

At the conclusion of his presentation, Ash introduced Bronwyn Lewis, granddaughter of Lance. She generously gave to the BHS a painting of *Benacre* by Lady Valerie Stanton-Hicks. This was painted from a photograph after the sale of Benacre. The Stanton-Hicks lived at 'Woodley" in Glen Osmond, the former home of Osmond Gilles, until Valerie returned to Perth in 1982. Bronwyn visited Valerie regularly until her death in 2011. She was a strong connection to the life at Benacre as she and Sir Cedric were very involved in Gretta's advocacy for curing tuberculosis.

The painting was gratefully accepted by the BHS and is now on display in the Local History Room in the Burnside Library.

Bronwyn Lewis and Ash Wright with the ***Benacre*** painting by Valerie Stanton-Hicks