

## Purchase of a painting by J H Ross

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

30 November 2007

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a painting by J H Ross

#### Main report

2. The following painting by J H Ross is presented to the Committee for consideration:

**Waverley Station, Edinburgh**

Oil on artist's board

c.1848

17 x 49.5cm

Price: £4,200

3. Very little is known about the artist J H Ross and the work is principally of interest as a topographical record of the development of Waverley Station. The panoramic view is from the south end of the North Bridge, looking towards the sea, Calton Hill with its buildings and monuments, and the new station in the foreground.
4. In the middle of the picture is Trinity College Church. The College was founded by Mary of Gueldres about 1460, and the choir and transepts of a substantial church were built but the nave was never completed. It became a parish church, in use from 1580 to 1848, with the last service being held in it on 14 May 1848. The North British Railway had bought the site and the building was dismantled. When rebuilding began on its present site in 1872, many of the stones had been pilfered and only the main body of the choir was recreated as Trinity Apse.
5. The train arriving at or leaving the station is the focus of attention on the left side of the picture, with a crowd of people observing its progress. New station buildings are on either of the track and more railway rolling stock is visible on the left side of the foreground. Also

visible are the houses on Low Calton, as is Waterloo Place. The entrance to the tunnel through the south flank of Calton Hill is visible and this was completed in 1845. The North British Railway opened its line to Berwick in 1846 and by in March 1847 was running services to London, taking 14 hours. On 4 March 1848, the Scotsman reported the opening of Waverley Bridge Station, after the union of the Edinburgh and Glasgow Railway Company and the North British Railway Company.

6. An interesting enclosed space is visible in the right foreground, possibly part of Trinity College or the Old Physic Garden, which was originally on this site. The rooftops of the lower part of the Old Town are shown on the right side of the picture, now the site of the new Council building, with two tall chimneys emphasising the industrial nature of this part of Edinburgh in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. All the buildings and monuments on Calton Hill are depicted accurately and in some detail, suggesting that the painting as a whole is a true and accurate record.
7. The work was sold at auction by Bearnès in Exeter on 11 November 2006. Prior to the auction, the work was drawn to attention of staff at the City Art Centre by a curator at the National Galleries of Scotland. The work was then viewed on our behalf by a colleagues at Exeter Museum and Art Gallery, who reported on the artistic quality and condition of the work. An unsuccessful bid was submitted for the work, which ended up being sold for £2300. The painting subsequently appeared at a Christie's auction in London in May 2007, where it was bought by the current vendor.
8. The work is very brown and covered in a thick layer of discoloured varnish. There are areas of damage in various parts of the painting and an attempt has been made to repair a specific area on the edge of the left side. If the Committee approve the purchase, it is recommended that a conservator view the work and give an estimate for cleaning, repairing and stabilising the work.
9. The watercolour is being sold by Anthony Wood Gallery in Edinburgh. If the Committee approve the purchase, an application for grant aid would be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions.

## Recommendations

10. Approve the purchase of a painting by J H Ross.



22/11/07

**JIM INCH**  
Director, Corporate Services

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<b>Appendices</b>	None
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<b>Wards affected</b>	City Wide
<b>Background Papers</b>	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held at the City Art Centre