Cliffe Castle Park & Museum

**The Rhinoceros Vase & the Changed Pattern Activity Trail (Extract)**

When she arrived, she came across a gentleman sitting at a round turning table - a potter’s wheel that spun around and around. A boy turned the wheel and another ran back and forth carrying finished pottery as the gentleman turned lumps of ugly, grey, clay into perfect pottery pieces. Plates, cups, jars and vases emerged from the wheel and were taken for firing in the hot kiln.

“What are you doing here girl?” asked a tall, smart gentleman who was standing behind her.

“I am looking for work” replied Lottie nervously.

“Come with me” he said, directing her towards an open doorway. Inside young girls were cutting out patterns whilst adults transferred the patterns onto pieces of perfectly fired pottery.

A girl picked up a tall, unpainted vase that had a hand crafted model of a rhinoceros perched on the top and carried it through to another room. Lottie trailed behind. The room was full of magnificent painted pottery. The girl carefully placed the delicate vase on a table in the middle of the room.

Another girl was painting ornate flowers on a white tea cup.

“This is going to be one of 200 pieces” remarked the girl. She smiled proudly at the finished design.

“Come here, you have a go” she said, handing a paintbrush and tea cup to Lottie.

She had never used a paint brush before but had learnt to sew and knit at Sunday school. Watching the older girl, Lottie followed what she did. By 6 p.m. her hand was aching and her eyes were tired.

Nearly a year passed and Lottie had become quite an artist. She loved to paint grand designs of flowers, landscapes and scenes from well-known stories. Her younger brother Edward had got a job working at the pottery too, fetching and carrying heavy clay pieces for a potter.

Everyone was talking about the Rhinoceros Vase, a new piece and one of a pair, which sat majestically in the centre of the room with wildflowers painted on its sides. Every day a little more gold gilt and decoration was added by the master painter, Mr. Brameld. Lottie was desperate to just touch it, hold it even.

Then one day, when everyone had gone home and Lottie and Edward were left sweeping the floor, she just couldn’t help herself. Reaching out, Lottie lifted the vase off of its special stand. At the same moment, a faint tapping sound could be heard, like a small beak pecking its way out of the shell of a delicate egg. As Lottie began to panic, a piece of the vase cracked and fell to the floor breaking into 6 pieces.

The sound grew louder and louder and within a few moments a mysterious creature had filled the room. Its head and feet were the claws of an eagle and its body that of lion. Large wings perched on its back waiting to take flight. As Lottie and Edward stood frozen with fear, the creature gobbled up the broken pieces as if they were scraps of food and flew out of the open doorway! Letting out muffled screams, the children ran out after the creature.

They searched the grounds looking for the broken pieces but none could be found. The creature had disappeared.