

Chapter Two

Digging With Stig



It was a fine autumn morning and the grass was very wet with dew outside. Barney pushed his breakfast down as fast as he could manage.

‘What do you want to do today?’ his Grandmother asked as she drank her coffee. ‘I have to go in to Sevenoaks this morning. Do you want to come?’

Barney’s heart sank. Go in to Sevenoaks? Well it was all right if you had nothing else to do. But he had to go and see Stig.

‘No thank you, Granny,’ he said. ‘I don’t think I want to go in to Sevenoaks.’

‘You’ll be quite happy just messing about here?’ asked his Grandmother.

‘Yes thank you. I just want to mess about. With – with Stig.’

‘Oh, I see,’ Granny smiled. ‘With your friend Stig. Well, Mrs Pratt will be here all the morning, so if you like you can stay with her. And with Stig, of course.’

Lou said she would like to go in to the town as she wasn't particularly interested in playing with Stig. Barney knew from the way she said it that she still thought Stig was only a pretend-friend. But that was all right. If she didn't want to meet Stig, she needn't.

'Can I go out now?' he asked.

'All right,' said Granny. 'Put your boots on!' she called after him as he shot through the door.

Barney's feet made dark prints in the dew as he headed across the lawn towards the chalk pit. Then he stopped, and stood still in the middle of the lawn. Suppose he didn't find Stig after all?

The sun was bright. Yellow leaves fluttered down from the elm tree on to the grass. A robin puffed its breast on a rose tree and squeaked at him. Barney suddenly wasn't sure that he believed in Stig himself. It wasn't a Stiggish day, like yesterday when he had fallen down the pit.

He *had* fallen, hadn't he? He felt the bump on the back of his head. Yes, that was real enough. He'd fallen and bumped his head. And then what? Funny things did happen when you bumped your head. Perhaps you only saw Stigs when you fell and bumped your head. He didn't think he wanted to fall over the cliff again on purpose and bump his head again.

Was Stig a person you could just go and play with like the children at the end of the road at home? He had to find out, but he didn't want to go to the chalk pit and find – *nothing!* He stood with his hands in his pockets in the middle of the lawn, his fingers playing with something hard in the left-hand pocket of his jeans.

He remembered something, and pulled out the thing he had in his hand. Of course – the flint! He looked at it glinting in the sunlight, like a black diamond with its chipped pattern. He'd seen Stig make it! There was no mistake about that. Of course Stig was real!

He set off again at a run, climbed the fence into the paddock, and waded through the long wet grass the other side. The copse round the edge of the chalk pit looked dark beyond the sunlit grass.

In the middle of the paddock he found himself slowing down and stopping again.

Something at the back of his mind was telling him that he'd seen pictures of chipped flints in books, and real ones in museums, and that they were made thousands of years ago by rough people who weren't alive any longer. People found them and put them in cases with notices on them. Perhaps he'd just found this one. And imagined everything else.

And supposing he hadn't imagined Stig, was he the sort of person who liked people coming to play?

Well, he told himself, all he really wanted to do was to look at the place where he had fallen over yesterday. Have another look down the dump. There was that bicycle, anyway.

He walked to the edge of the paddock. A clump of brown grass jumped up from under his feet and bounced away towards a bramble patch, showing a white tail and two long ears. Barney's heart bumped, but it was only a rabbit. He ran after it, but it had disappeared in the thick of the undergrowth.

Feeling bolder, he climbed over the fence and went carefully towards the edge of the pit, making sure this time that he kept near a big tree that seemed to be well anchored to the side, and peeped over.

He could see the patch of raw earth and white chalk where the ground had given way under him, the dangling creepers lower down, and a scatter of broken chalk at the bottom. He craned over to see the hole he had made in the roof of the den. There was a pile of branches and rubbish against the foot of the cliff, but no gaping hole. Not a sign of a hole, of a roof, of a den – of a Stig. He listened. A blackbird turning over dry leaves in search of worms was making a noise much too big for itself. But apart from that the pit was silent and empty.

Barney walked away from the edge of the pit and climbed over the fence into the sunshine of the paddock, thinking hard. He looked at the stone in his hand, he felt the bump on his head. He had seen

the raw patch where the ground had given way. He *remembered* crashing through a sort of roof and leaving a big gaping hole. And yet there wasn't a hole.

So he couldn't have made one.

But he must have landed somewhere. And he had that clear picture in his head of looking up through a hole at the side of the cliff and the clouds passing over the sky.

And suddenly, as he stood in the middle of the paddock, he gave a big jump as the answer came to him like getting a sum right.

If there wasn't a hole it was because somebody had *mended* it! Stig wasn't the sort of person to leave a large hole in his roof for long. Not his friend Stig!

All at once everything fitted together – yesterday's adventure on that Stiggish sort of afternoon, the bump on his head, the flint, and this bright autumn morning when he was going to visit his friend Stig. And he was quite clear in his head now what he was going to do and how he was going to do it.

He set off running, back to the garden. Presents for Stig! When you visited people this time of year you always brought something from the garden: tomatoes you couldn't bottle or apples you hadn't room to store. He looked round the big old apple tree for windfalls. There were some big ones, difficult to manage without a basket, but he stuffed them into his shirt, making sure there weren't any wasps in them first. What else? He saw a line of carrots – his favourite fruit! He was allowed to pull up carrots, they were good for his teeth, so he heaved up a few good-sized ones and rubbed the earth off with his fingers. Then he had an idea and ran to the tool-shed where he found a ball of garden string. It was all right just to *borrow* it. Back he ran again, across the garden, over the fence, across the paddock, over into the copse, and through the brambles and dead leaves to the edge of the pit.

He sat himself comfortably on the trunk of the tree that curved out over the pit like the neck of a camel, and looked carefully again at what he could see. There was the broken edge of the cliff, there

were the trailing creepers, there at the bottom were the scattered lumps of chalk that had come down with him. And now that he was really looking at it he could see a piece of new linoleum – well, not exactly new, nothing in the dump was new, but it looked as if it had been put there not long ago because it wasn't covered with moss like things that had been there for a long time. And he could see, at one side of this pile of branches and things that was Stig's leanto roof, a faint path in the bottom of the pit that led to the front of the den.

He found the end of the ball of string and tied the bunch of carrots to it. Then he began to pay out the string, with the carrots dangling on the end, towards the bottom of the pit. He hoped it was long enough. There always seems to be miles of string in a ball, but it dwindled and dwindled as he lowered the carrots down, until he was afraid that it wouldn't reach the bottom. Bother! A cobble, a regular spider's-nest of tangled string, appeared and he had to stop to uncobble it. At last, with a few feet in hand, the carrots were swinging on a level with Stig's front door. Barney's seat was not quite above it, so he had to get the carrots swinging to and fro, all that way beneath him, until they were actually knocking at the door like five pink fingers. Barney was bubbling so much with laughter inside him at the trick he was playing on Stig that he forgot to be dizzy.

'Stig!' he called down the pit. 'Morning, Stig! I'm knocking at your front door!' And suddenly, out from the stack of branches appeared the tousled head of Stig, and stayed there wagging to and fro, following the swinging carrots like a cat watching a pendulum. Barney nearly fell off the tree with laughing.

'Hallo Stig!' he called. 'Good morning! I'm Barney, you remember? How are you?'

Stig looked up, and for a moment Barney felt quite frightened at the ferocious scowl on his face, and was glad to be high up out of his reach. Should he have played a trick on Stig? Perhaps he didn't have what the grown-ups called a Sense of Humour. Did Stigs have sense of humours?

But when Stig made out who it was sitting above him his face suddenly changed, his big white teeth showed in a broad grin, he waved both his arms over his head, and he jumped about in the bottom of the pit to show how pleased he was.

‘Have a carrot, Stig!’ called Barney. ‘For you,’ he said, pointing to Stig. ‘To eat,’ he added. ‘Good for your teeth!’ he said, making biting movements. Stig leapt at the carrots as they swung past, caught them, looked at them closely, smelt them, then put one in his mouth



and crunched it. He looked up at Barney, smiling with his mouth full, to show that he liked his present, then made signs which clearly meant that Barney was to come down.

‘Well, I’m not going to jump this time,’ said Barney. ‘And this string’s too thin to climb down. Going round!’ he said, making circling movements with his arms. He got off his perch and walked the long way round the top of the pit to the shallow end where he had got out the night before.

It was more difficult finding his way to Stig's den along the floor of the pit than it had been finding his way out the night before. The dump looked quite different – more cheerful, with the sunlight pouring down through the golden autumn leaves, and the ash and sycamore seeds twiddling down from the trees on top. But the tail of the aeroplane was only part of a farm machine, and the ship's helm was a broken cartwheel. There was the bicycle too, just a rusty frame with bits of brake hanging on to it. Never mind, he'd found something much more interesting, and he'd seen it and spoken to it in broad daylight. A real live Stig, and he was going to visit him.

That's if he could find his way among the giant nettles.

Suddenly, there was Stig, coming to meet him straight through a nettle patch as if stings meant nothing to him. Barney stopped. What now? Shake hands? Rub noses? – no, perhaps not! He remembered the apples he had stowed inside his shirt, took one out, and held it towards Stig on the palm of his hand as if he was trying to make friends with a horse.

'I hope you liked the carrots, Stig,' said Barney. 'Have an apple!' Stig took the apple quite politely between finger and thumb – not between his teeth, as Barney somehow expected him to – and sniffed it. Barney took out another apple for himself and bit into it.

'Good!' he said. 'Delicious!'

Stig took a bite, seemed to like it, smiled, and they both started walking towards the den, munching their apples. Stig just blundered through the nettles, and as far as Barney could see they *stung* him and raised bumps as they did on other people, but he just didn't care. Barney himself avoided the nettles as much as he could. He got stung once or twice but decided not to make a fuss about it. Stigs don't mind stings, he thought, so he'd better not.

Stig led the way to the den. Barney noticed several dumps of new white chalk near the path, and remembered the new tunnelling he had seen yesterday, and the baby's bath full of chalk.

'Been digging, Stig?' he asked, pointing to the dumps. Stig grinned and nodded.

It was gloomy and overhung at Stig's end of the pit even on this bright day, and the den itself, now that the hole in the roof was mended, was even darker. The teapot lamp was flickering and throwing a dim light on the den and the place where Stig had been digging, but it was not very cheerful.

Come to think of it, thought Barney, rabbits and things that live in holes don't have any light *at all*. Not much fun for them, with no windows. Couldn't he find some windows for Stig?

What made it worse was that Stig had started a small fire in the den part. He must have just done it, because Barney had not noticed any smoke when he was sitting on the tree-trunk. The smoke was filling the den, and there was no way out for it except to trickle through the gaps in the roof. It made Barney's eyes water, but he supposed it was one of the things you just had to put up with, like nettles. All the same, the place could do with a chimney, as well as windows.

He began to get used to the darkness, and he could see that the tunnel at the back of the cave went further back into the chalk than he had noticed. The digging tools were lying about: the bedstead leg, a broken cast-iron shoe-scraper, and an iron bar like the one he'd seen his father use on the jack to lift the car up.

Stig was reaching up to offer Barney another turnip, but Barney didn't feel like turnip so soon after breakfast.

'Can I help you dig, Stig?' he asked. 'I expect you're busy anyhow.' He went to the end of the tunnel and picked up the bit of bedstead, and began to attack the wall of chalk. It was not as easy as he had expected. The chalk in the inside of the hill here was firm, not crumbly as it was on the outside where the rain got at it. Barney's bashes with the awkward piece of metal only broke off smallish chips of chalk, and he was soon puffed.

Stig, who had been standing watching him, took the digger from his hands and showed him how to dig out a hollow at the bottom of the chalk wall, then knock down large chunks which came away easily because they were not held up underneath. There was soon a pile of loose chalk, and Barney picked it up with his hands and put

it in the small tin bath. When it was full it was about as much as he could do to drag it along the floor of the cave towards the entrance. Stig helped him, and between them they lugged the load out of the den and dumped it. But Barney noticed that Stig took care to put it some way from his door. He supposed that piles of new white chalk would let people know that something was going on.

Stig let him dig next time, and he soon got the hang of cutting under and letting it tumble down from the top. Now and then they would come to a great flint embedded in the chalk, like a fossil monster with knobs and bulges, and they would have to chip round it, worry it, and loosen it like a tooth until at last it came free, usually bringing down a lot of chalk with it. They worked on happily for quite a time, taking it in turns to dig and load, and now and then they would stop for a break and take a drink of water from the tin or eat a refreshing apple.

Barney's jeans were white with chalk dust, and his hair and nails were full of it. He suddenly wondered what his Grandmother would say – then he suddenly wondered what time it was! In spite of the apples his tummy was telling him that it might be lunch time.

'You haven't got a clothes-brush, have you Stig?' he asked. Stig looked blank and Barney decided that he probably hadn't. His eye fell on Stig's water-pipe. Somebody had thrown away a vacuum cleaner, so there must be one of the brush things somewhere. Sure enough he spied one, fixed as a sort of T-piece on the end of a long thin pole that was helping to hold the roof up. He thought the roof might hold itself up for a bit while he got the worst of the chalk dust off with the vacuum-cleaner end, and it did. Stig was watching with a puzzled look, wondering why Barney should be pulling down part of his roof to brush at his clothes with.

'You're lucky, Stig,' said Barney. 'Nobody asks you how you got in such a mess. I've got to go now. Must be nearly lunch time. Pity I can't ask you to lunch, but...' But really, he thought, nobody else even believes in him yet.

'I'll be back this afternoon,' Barney said from the door. 'Thanks for letting me help you. Goodbye!'

Grandmother and Lou were late getting back from the town, so he had time to get the chalk out of his nails and hair and to look fairly respectable for lunch. They were too full of talk about how they had spent their morning to question him much about what he had been doing.

Over the stewed apples he was able to say quietly: 'Granny, have you got any things you don't want?'

'Things I don't want, dear?' Grandmother repeated. 'What sort of things? Chilblains? Grandchildren?'

'No, Granny. I mean – things like windows and chimneys.'

Grandmother thought about this for a moment, and then said that really she couldn't think of anything like windows and chimneys except windows and chimneys, and she thought the house had only just enough of these to go round. And Lou just laughed and said, '*Really, Barney!*'

Then Grandmother said that it did remind her there were some tins and jam-jars she had meant to put out for the dustbin man, and perhaps Barney would be a dear and carry them to the gate.

There were more jam-jars than Barney had thought possible, and quite a lot of useful tins, the sort with lids. Barney looked at them. The dustbin man wouldn't say thank you for them, he thought. Why shouldn't Stig have them?

He remembered a big wooden box which Grandfather had helped him fix wheels on to, so that he and Lou could use it as a cart. He searched round and found it among the firewood, but still with its four wheels more or less straight and the piece of rope on the front to pull it with. He loaded it with jam-jars and tins, and found it quite a weight when he set off across the paddock with it. He looked at Flash, the pony, as he struggled through a clump of long grass and called rather crossly: 'You might come and help pull, instead of standing there!' But he knew that Flash took a lot of persuading to be caught for Lou to ride him, let alone for pulling carts. The pony

just stood and watched, tossing his head now and then at the afternoon flies.

By the time Barney had got his load to the edge of the pit he was quite tired, but there was still the problem of getting them to the bottom. He sat on the camel's-neck tree-trunk. The string was still there. It was the thick brown sort, and he thought it would be strong enough for a few jam-jars.

He called to Stig, and after a time Stig came out backwards, like a badger with its bedding, dragging a load of chalk.

'I've got some things for you, Stig!' Barney called. He pulled up the string and took the end to the pile of jam-jars. About eight of them were packed in a cardboard box. It would take too long to pass them down one by one, so he tied the string round the box, took it carefully along the tree-trunk, and started to lower it. This wasn't nearly as easy as the carrots. The box swung wildly, the string round it started slipping, the part he was holding tried to run through his fingers and burned his hands. He took a turn round the stump of a branch and let it run out round that, hardly daring to look down and see what was happening. He hoped Stig wouldn't get a jam-jar on his head.

The box was hanging by one corner when it reached the ground, but instead of untying it Stig disappeared into his den.

'Hey! Stig! Undo it!' Barney called. 'There's some more to come.'

Stig came out again holding what was left of a large broad-brimmed lady's straw hat, with ribbons to tie it under the chin. He untied the string from the box and tied it to the ribbons. It made quite a useful-looking cargo-sling.

'Jolly good idea, Stig!' Barney shouted. Stig's got brains, he thought.

After that it was quite easy. He hauled up the hat, filled it with jam-jars, lowered it down with the string running round the stump of branch, waited for Stig to unload, hauled it up again, and so on. When he had finished the jam-jars he started on the tins, which

were much lighter. And when he had lowered all the tins he looked at the truck.

How strong is string? he wondered. Could he send the truck down the same way? If he didn't he would have to trundle it all the way round the top and along the bottom of the pit.

He wound the string a few times round the branch-stump, leaving enough loose to reach the truck on the cliff-top, humped himself along the tree-trunk, tied the string to a wheel of the truck, moved back along the trunk, and pulled the truck towards him by the string. The truck lurched over the edge of the cliff, swung wildly outwards on the string, which ran out so fast that he couldn't stop it – until a tangle in the string made it stop with a jerk, the string broke, and the truck was falling through the air.

Barney held on for dear life to the tree, with his face against the mossy bark, and shut his eyes. He felt weak and dizzy.

At last he allowed himself to look down. He couldn't see the truck at first. Then he saw that it had swung out to land in the branches of an elder tree, and was hanging there quite happily.

'I've sent the truck down,' he called to Stig. 'It may come in useful.'

He was still feeling what his Grandmother used to call hot-and-cold-all-over, but he carefully inched himself off the tree and on to firm ground, and set off round and down to the pit. A pity he couldn't let himself down on a rope – but no, he thought, he wouldn't try just yet.

His idea of sending the things down on the string had been a good one though, he thought to himself as he walked through the copse. Another day he'd have to find some more tins and jam-jars to send down. He hoped Stig liked them. They would come in useful for – for – well, things like that always came in useful. If you kept them long enough.

By the time he got to the den, Stig had untangled the truck from the tree, and was squatting looking at it, and at the tins and jamjars. And then Barney wondered what they were going to do with them.

‘These are jam-jars, Stig,’ he explained. ‘Jam and marmalade come in them, and you can use them for keeping stuff in them – rice and coffee and things like that.’ But did Stig *want* to keep rice and coffee in his den? ‘And these are tins. They’re empty of course, but you get all sorts of things in tins. Peaches and baked beans. You have to open them with an opener like this.’

He took out of his pocket a tin-opener which he usually carried about with him. It was the sort with a butterfly handle which you had to turn. Just to show, he fitted it on to the bottom of one of the empty tins and twisted the handle. The opener crept round the edge of the tin, the blade ploughed into the metal at the bottom, and soon the shiny round disc of metal came loose.

Stig was fascinated. He looked at the flat round piece of tin which had been the bottom, he looked at the empty tube which was all that was left of the rest of it. And he took the tin-opener from Barney and turned the handle, but he couldn’t make it out.

‘It’s quite easy, Stig. Look!’ and Barney took another tin, fitted the opener on the bottom, and showed him how to work it. And there was another round plate and another tin tube. Then Stig had to have a go, and they started on a third.

One of the tins had been rather flattened, but it gave Barney an idea for how it might be used. He took it, left Stig with the others, and towed the truck into the den and along to the place where Stig had been digging at the chalk. There was quite a lot of loose rubble lying about there, and Barney set to work to shovel it into the truck with the flattened tin. It was certainly better than using his hands, though it wasn’t quite the right sort of shovel-shape yet. He hammered at it with an unbroken flint-stone and made it into quite a handy scoop, like the sort the village grocer used for shovelling sugar into little paper bags.

He toiled away until the truck was heaped full. It held much more chalk than the tin bath, and because of its wheels he could pull it away quite easily.

‘Look, Stig!’ he said as he went past where Stig was sitting. ‘Look at all the chalk I’ve loaded.’ But Stig seemed too busy to notice.

Barney wheeled the truck along to the place where they were now dumping the chalk, and tipped out his load. Then he ran back to the den, with the truck bouncing along empty behind him. When he got back, Stig was sitting there surrounded by round plates of tin and empty tubes, and just in the act of taking the bottom out of the last tin.

‘Stig, what are you doing?’ exclaimed Barney. ‘You’ve spoiled all the tins now! You can’t keep things in tins with no bottoms!’ He was really quite annoyed. What was the use of a lot of tin tubes with no ends?

Stig sat there playing with them. He seemed to have the idea of fitting one inside the other, but that wouldn’t work because they were all exactly the same size. However, one of them that had got a bit pinched did fit into another, which seemed to please him a lot.

Barney thought it was a bit childish of Stig to sit there playing, like a baby with plastic bricks, when there was all that work to be done. But Stig went on seriously worrying over the problem of fitting them together. He found that by pinching together the end of a tin he could *make* it fit into the next one, and soon he had four or five fitted together like a length of stove-pipe.

Stove-pipe! Barney *knew* there was something Stig needed badly.

‘You *are* clever, Stig!’ he said. ‘You’ve made a chimney!’

Stig looked blank. He didn’t know he needed a chimney. He didn’t know what a chimney was. Certainly he’d made one, but if it hadn’t been for Barney he wouldn’t have known.

Working together, they fitted all the tins one into the other until they had a pipe that was taller than either of them. With Barney directing, they carried it into the smoky den, where it was too long to stand upright.

‘Now all we’ve got to do is poke it through the roof,’ said Barney. Stig looked doubtfully at him, but together they managed quite easily to push it through a crack between the piece of



linoleum and a sheet of corrugated iron. But now what? They couldn't just leave it hanging above the fire.

'I know!' exclaimed Barney. 'The bath!' He left Stig patiently holding the chimney, and went and fetched the tin bath. What luck! It had a rusty hole in the bottom which only needed a little work with the boot-scraper to make it big enough to fit the chimney through. Stig was dimly beginning to see what Barney was trying to do. Together they built up a fireplace of chalk-blocks and big flints, rested the bath upside down on top – and there was mantelpiece and chimney, with the flue leading from the hole in the upturned bath, through the roof, and into the open air.

Barney lit the fire – which Stig had laid as they built the fireplace – and threw some additional scraps of paper and twigs on to it. Once the smoke had learnt its way it went roaring up the pipe. They rushed outside and there it was coming out of what looked like a proper chimney-pot sticking through the roof. Stig watched, fascinated.

'There you are, Stig,' said Barney. 'Now you've got a proper fireplace people can come and visit you without getting their eyes full of smoke.' Actually Stig didn't seem to care very much about having the place full of smoke, but he was as pleased with his fireplace as if it had been a new toy, and kept on putting twigs and leaves on the fire so that he could go out and see the smoke coming

out the other end. And Barney was so proud of his invention that he looked round for something else to invent.

He saw the stack of jam-jars. What had he brought those for? It would be too dull just to use them to keep food in. Stig's den wasn't that sort of place. He had to think of a new way of using jam-jars.

What had he thought Stig's house needed most? A chimney – he'd got that now. A chimney and – yes, a window! A *window*.

Well, windows were made of glass, and so were jam-jars. Yes, but the *shape!* Doors were made of wood and so were clothes-pegs; ships were made of steel and so were tin-openers. But you can't make a ship out of tin-openers or a door out of clothes-pegs. The shape's wrong.

You couldn't hammer glass flat, could you? He picked up the boot-scraper. No, of course not.

Stig had stacked the jars on top of each other, lying on their sides. They made a sort of wall of glass like that. But they rolled about, and of course there were gaps between the jars.

Barney looked at one side of the den, the darkest side, which really needed windows. It was built of wooden boxes from the dump, bottoms outward, open tops inward. He took the digging-tool and knocked the bottom out of one. There was now an open square where the daylight came in. But so did the wind, and Stig didn't seem at all pleased at sitting in a draught.

Stigs like to be snug, thought Barney.

He carried the jars in and stacked them in the frame of the box. They fitted quite well, the light came in, but the draught came in too.

Stig got up and looked at the gaps between the jars, grunted, and went out of the den. Barney followed him, wondering. Stig led the way along the bottom of the cliff to where there had lately been a landslide and quite a large chunk of cliff-top had come down in one piece. Between the topsoil and the chalk there was a layer of red clay, good damp squidgy stuff you could make model animals with. Stig began to dig out lumps of clay with his fingers, and Barney

found another good clay-mine and did the same. They got as much as they could carry and took it back to the den, and from the outside Stig set to work to fill in the gaps between the jam-jars. They had to make two more journeys before all the jars were firmly bedded in clay, and then Barney carefully wiped the smears off the bottoms of the jars with a rag.

Then they stood and admired their window. They even made faces at each other, one standing inside and the other outside, because you could almost see through it. It certainly let the light in, even though it was late in the afternoon and there was not much light to let in.

‘Well, well,’ said Barney. ‘That’s that!’ It was a thing he had often heard his Grandfather say when he’d finished a job.

He was tired after all the inventing he had done. He went to sit down, and then he saw all the round plates of tin that Stig had cut out, lying around on the floor. He gathered them up. There must be a use for these, too. He went back to the window, and found that the discs fitted exactly over the ends of the jars if he pressed them into the soft clay. There were just enough to go round.

‘There you are, Stig,’ he said. ‘Like on a ship, to shut the port-holes. If you don’t want people to look in. Or to shut the dark out.’

There was a feeling in the evening air that darkness was coming and that it would be snug to sit by the new fireplace and watch the fire going up the chimney. But Barney suddenly remembered something and stood up with his mouth open.

‘Stig,’ he said. ‘I’ve got to go home. All the way home I mean. I probably won’t be staying with Granny till Christmas.’

Stig looked at him.

‘Stig,’ said Barney ‘When I come back again, you – you will still be here, won’t you?’

Stig didn’t answer, but he went to a little niche in the chalk wall, poked about among some things there and brought back something which he gave to Barney. He looked at it. It was a little chipped flint, perfectly shaped like a flat Christmas-tree, and very sharp.

‘An arrow-head?’ Barney gasped. ‘For me? Oh, *thank you* Stig! I – I really must go now. See you at Christmas. You will be here at Christmas, won’t you, Stig? Good-bye!’ And he ran off.

As he made his way along the bottom of the pit he felt he knew the way there better than anywhere else in the world. And he felt that Stig’s house was as much his home as anywhere else. After all, it was like drawing pictures. Once you’ve put a chimney and a window on a house, you’ve really *made* a house.