Gene Kemp was born in 1926 and soon established herself as one of the most inventive and imaginative of British children’s writers. After studying she taught, married and had three children. She is best known for her Cricklepit School stories, including *The Turbulent Term of Tyke Tiler*, a winner of the Carnegie Medal and the Children’s Rights Award, *Charlie Lewis Plays for Time*, which was runner-up for the Whitbread Award, and *Just Ferret*, which was a runner-up for the Smarties Award. In addition, she has written *The Clock Tower Ghost*, *Tamworth Pig Stories*, *No Place Like, No Way Out*, *The Well*, *Jason Bodger and the Priory Ghost*, *The Mink War*, *Juniper*, short stories and a poetry anthology. She also wrote for TV and radio. In 1984 she was awarded an honorary degree for her books, which have been translated into numerous languages. She lived in Devon and died in 2015.
Faber & Faber has published children’s books since 1929. Some of our very first publications included Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats by T. S. Eliot starring the now world-famous Macavity, and The Iron Man by Ted Hughes. Our catalogue at the time said that ‘it is by reading such books that children learn the difference between the shoddy and the genuine’. We still believe in the power of reading to transform children’s lives.
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Ah! Tamworth Pig is a very fine pig
 The best you’ll ever see,
His ears stand up, his snout is long,
   His score is twenty-three.
He’s wise and good and big and bold,
   And clever as can be,
A faithful friend to young and old
   The Pig of Pigs is he.

By courtesy of Mr Rab

‘... Pigs of the Tamworth breed ... are creatures of enchantment ...

Anonymous pig-fancier
THE PRIME OF TAMWORTH PIG
CHAPTER ONE

THOMAS SAT ON TOP OF A GRASSY HILL ON a warm, windy, April afternoon.

‘Yoicks,’ he shouted into the breeze.

He felt wonderful, having just recovered from mumps, measles, chicken-pox, German measles, scarlatina and whooping cough. But, at last, he was better; there didn’t appear to be much left to catch and the doctor had said he needn’t go back to school till September.

‘Just let him run wild,’ were his words.

‘If he’s at home running wild, then I shall go to school to keep out of his way,’ Daddy had replied.

Thomas bellowed to the fields and hedges all around:
‘No more school, mouldy old school,
No more school and sorrow,
Lots and lots of holidays
Before there comes tomorrow.’

He proceeded to do so. Mr Rab roared with pain. He was no match for Hedgecock.

‘Stop that,’ Thomas commanded. ‘I’ll do the bashing round here. Come on. What shall we do?’

‘The stream,’ Hedgecock said. ‘We’ll go to the stream.’

‘Yes, to the stream; let’s go.’

They ran over the grass, Mr Rab trying to dodge the daisies; he was soft-hearted over flowers, over everything in fact, except Hedgecock, and he hated treading on daisies.

Suddenly they were there. Banks, two or three feet high, covered with mossy rocks just right for sitting on, bordered the clear water. The trio sniffed eagerly. It smelt good, as ever. Perhaps it was the bracken, or the wild thyme, or perhaps it was just the stream itself that gurgled over the brown stones on the sandy bed. The path ran into a curving bay and stepping-stones crossed to the other side. Farther down there was a stretch of grassy turf covered with molehills and mole-holes. Thomas walked into the water, still with his shoes and socks on, and tried to

He rolled over and over down the hill at the sheer bliss of his thought, followed closely by Hedgecock and Mr Rab who were arguing as usual.

‘You’re not in the least like a real rabbit. Don’t make me laugh.’

‘Yes, I am. I am. Say I am, please. Just a bit like one.’

Hedgecock snorted loudly.

‘I never saw a real rabbit with a red and white striped waistcoat, a green bow tie, and skinny, pink, furry legs. You’re enough to make a cat laugh – to say nothing of a real rabbit.’

‘Well, what about you? What are you, then? A hedgecock with feathery prickles. You can’t fly and you can’t prickle.’

‘But I’ll tell you what I can do. I can bash you, Stripey.’

‘No more school, mouldy old school,
No more school and sorrow,
Lots and lots of holidays
Before there comes tomorrow.’
catch minnows shooting this way and that. Then he sat down on a stone and contemplated his feet (over which the stream rippled making very interesting patterns) for some time.

‘I know, let’s make a dam,’ he said at last.

They chose a spot where the stream narrowed between high banks. Hedgecock worked steadily, counting the large stones (four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-eleven) as he carried them to Thomas, who rammed them into position against the log they’d pushed across the stream. Mr Rab was ordered to plaster mud and sand into the gaps. He whimpered to himself, for the water was cold and his paws hurt. Water still rushed through the spaces between the stones but its colour was turning to a reddish-brown, and gradually it slowed down and began to spread out on the flat, grassy ground above the dam.

Mr Rab sat on a rock, tucking his wet paws under his waistcoat, and stuck his thin legs into the sun-warmed grass. The other two ignored him, as they continued to stuff pebbles, mud and grass into every crack. Mr Rab began to recite in his special voice that he kept for poetry, which was a kind of high, wobbly moan.

‘There’s a stream on a grassy common
Runs very swift and clear . . .’

‘You can cut that lot out,’ Hedgecock shouted. ‘I hate your rotten poetry. If you’ve enough energy to say that old rubbish, then you’d better come and help.’

But Mr Rab wasn’t listening. ‘Look! Look!’ he shrieked.

The others turned round to see why he was dancing about and pointing a quivering paw. Upstream of the dam, the water was now several feet wide and all the moleholes had disappeared beneath it. There on the grass, shaking their fists, were dozens of angry moles.

‘You horrible beasts,’ the Chief Mole shouted, leaping from one damp foot to the other. ‘You’ve wrecked our homes. You nearly drowned us all.’
‘We didn’t mean . . .’ Thomas began.
‘Yes you did. You did it on purpose. I know you. We all know you. Terrible Thomas, that’s who you are; you – you – you—’

The mole spluttered with rage and wetness.

Mr Rab was dashing the tears from his eyes and Hedgecock was trying to hide in the bracken.

‘I’m sorry,’ Thomas muttered. ‘We’ll undam: I mean, we’ll knock it down. Hedgecock, stop creeping away. Come and help.’

With one accord, they and the moles all began to demolish the dam. It came down much faster than it went up, Hedgecock noted bitterly. Soon the stream was flowing as noisily and happily as before.

‘It will be all right now,’ the Chief Mole said. ‘We shall dry out in the sun. I don’t think you meant it after all.’

‘No, we didn’t.’

‘Next time, build farther up there and then it won’t affect us.’

‘But will there be a next time?’ Mr Rab moaned. ‘Look at us.’

Silently they inspected one another: wet, scratched, plastered with mud. Thomas had torn his trousers and lost his shoes and socks.

‘Come on, there’s going to be trouble,’ he said.

At that moment two figures leapt from the bank and pushed Thomas flat into the stream. Even as his head was held down into the cold water, while their feet kicked him, Thomas knew who they were – Christopher Robin Baggs (most unsuitably
named), a spotty boy with stick-out teeth, and his rough, tough friend, Lurcher Dench, both enemies of Thomas. He had fought many battles with them, but he had thought they were at school today, and so he had not been on the look-out. He squirmed and struggled and kicked under their combined weight. Then one of them stood on his legs. It hurt.

‘Let’s drown old Twopenny Tom,’ they were yelling. ‘Down with Measle Bug.’

Somehow he got his face out of the water. Hedgecock was snapping and biting but Mr Rab had disappeared. The rage inside Thomas was bubbling like a boiling cauldron. Fancy letting himself be caught like this and without shoes. He couldn’t have been more defenceless. The terrible thought shot through his head that perhaps they really did intend to drown him, as Lurcher once more ground his face down into the sand and water. There was a roaring in Thomas’s ears and stars shot across the blankness that was enveloping him. The roaring crescendoed into a mighty sound that was somehow not in his head and as if by magic, the weight lifted off him, the kicks and blows and the pain ceased, and he stood up shakily to see the backs of his attackers running away as if pursued by demons. Mr Rab’s soft paws were stroking his sore legs as Thomas stumbled forward to his rescuer.

There on the bank stood a huge, golden pig, a giant of a pig, the colour of beech leaves in autumn, with upstanding, furry ears and a long snout.

‘Tamworth!’ Thomas gasped, spitting out water, sand and the odd tooth. ‘Oh! Tamworth, I am pleased to see you. How did you know?’

‘Mr Rab fetched me – ran like the wind, he did. I wasn’t far away. Funny the way those two objectionable boys fled when they saw me. I can’t think why. I’m a most amiable animal and I don’t believe in violence.’

‘I ache all over,’ Thomas said, investigating his bruises.

‘Up on my back, all of you. Home we must go. Your mother will undoubtedly have a few words to say. Humph! Don’t wet all my bristles.’
just a piece of shabby, grey blanket but to Thomas, Num was warmth and softness and comfort in times of sorrow. Wriggling gingerly into the welcoming folds, he said to Mr Rab:

‘Sing a bedtime song.’

‘Not that old muck,’ Hedgecock growled.

‘Go and count your squares if you don’t want to hear it.’

Hedgecock retired muttering to the blanket of knitted squares at the foot of the bed. There were eight one way and ten the other, all in different colours. Hedgecock loved to count them in tens, or twos, or ones.

Mr Rab sang reedily. This was a special poem and he’d made up a tune to it, of which he was very proud.

‘Mr Rab has gone to sleep
Tucked in his tiny bed
He has curled up his furry paws
And laid down his sleepy head.’
BLOSSOM, THOMAS’S SISTER, HAD A DAY’S holiday from school and so got up very early, full of cheer. She laid the breakfast, took tea to Mummy and Daddy and then woke up Thomas to play a game of Monopoly. Thomas liked games but hated to lose and he hated paying out any money so from time to time he would rush from the room roaring and stamping with rage. Then, having simmered down, he would come back.

Blossom remained quite unperturbed by all this, merely continuing with her book till his return. She was a round, brown-eyed girl, rather like an otter, with an amiable disposition and a kind heart. Like Mr Rab she loved poetry and hated sums. She

‘Seventy-eight, seventy-nine, eighty,’ droned Hedgecock. Then there was a loud snore as he, like the others, fell asleep.