

The Housekeeper's Tale - Ellen Penketh's Story: The Women Who Really Ran the English Country House

Tessa Boase



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This is Ellen Penketh's story, one of the five stories that make up The Housekeeper's Tale.

Erddig – or Erthig, to the Welsh – was an anchor in a fast-changing world. For five years it was home to Ellen Penketh, whose infamy remains in the estate's archives as 'the thief cook'. In 1907 the Yorke family were caught up in a very public scandal – a scandal that did deep and profound damage to their patriarchal belief in staff loyalty.

Mrs Penketh's tenure before this domestic unraveling bore all the signs of a long and most successful one and tells the tale of a women who was cherished for her Charlotte russe and even, initially, held a close relationship with her mistress. Just how this significant fall from grace came about is one that remains shrouded in mystery, but its impact was laid bare for all to witness.

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