



## Anglo-Turkish Society in-person lecture, 13 July 2022, 6.00 pm (UK time)

Speaker: Jo Willett

Venue: Royal Anthropological Institute, 50 Fitzroy St, Fitzrovia, London W1T 5BT

Title: 'The Pioneering Life of Mary Wortley Montagu: Scientist and Feminist'

300 years ago, in April 1721, a smallpox epidemic was raging in England. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu had lived in Turkey and seen at first hand the process of inoculation used there to protect people against the deadly disease. She knew that she could save her 3-year-old daughter. Her courageous action - making her daughter the first person protected in the western world - eventually led to the worldwide eradication of smallpox and the prevention of millions of deaths. But Mary was more than a scientific campaigner. She mixed with the greatest politicians, writers, artists and thinkers of her day. She was also an important early feminist, writing powerfully and provocatively about the position of women. She was best friends with the poet Alexander Pope. The two collaborated on a series of poems, which made her into a household name, an 'It Girl'. But their friendship turned sour, and Pope used his pen to vilify Mary publicly. Aristocratic by birth, Mary chose to elope with Edward Wortley Montagu, whom she knew she did not love, so she could avoid a forced marriage to someone else. In middle age, her marriage stale, she fell for someone young enough to be her son - and, unknown to her, bisexual. She set off on a new life with him abroad. When this relationship failed, she stayed on in Europe, narrowly escaping the coercive control of an Italian conman. After twenty-two years abroad, she returned home to London to die. The son-in-law she had dismissed as a young man, John Stuart, Earl of Bute, had meanwhile become Prime Minister. Jo's talk, based on her book of the same title, discusses Mary's action-packed life. The talk will focus Lady Mary's time living in Adrianople (modern-day Edirne) and Constantinople and how Mary's learning there about inoculation changed the course of history.

Booking essential: <https://jo-willett-presentation.eventbrite.co.uk>

Contact: [contact@angloturkishsociety.org.uk](mailto:contact@angloturkishsociety.org.uk)



LADY MARY WORTLEY MONTAGU.



Jo has been an award-winning TV drama and comedy producer all her working life. This is her first book. Her tv credits range from the recent MANHUNT: THE NIGHTSTALKER, starring Martin Clunes, to BIRDS OF A FEATHER. Her most relevant productions for this project include BRIEF ENCOUNTERS in 2016 (a fictionalised story of the first women who ran Anne Summers' parties in the 1980s), THE MAKING OF A LADY in 2012 (an adaption of the Frances Hodgson Burnett novel The Making of a Marchioness), BERTIE AND ELIZABETH in 2002 (telling the story of the Queen Mother's marriage) and the BAFTA-and-RTS-Award-Winning A RATHER ENGLISH MARRIAGE in 1998 (starring Albert Finney, Tom Courtenay and Joanna Lumley, adapted from the novel of the same name by Angela Lambert). She studied English at Queens' College Cambridge and has an MA from Birkbeck in Arts Policy. She is married with a daughter, a son and a stepson. She lives in London and Dorset. [www.devoniaroad.co.uk](http://www.devoniaroad.co.uk)

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