Who Was James Boswell?

James Boswell (1740-1795) — advocate, traveler, journalist, Scotsman and author of that most amazing book, the *Life of Johnson*.

Born on the 29th of October, 1740 in Edinburgh, he became known for his friendship with Dr. Samuel Johnson, his *Account of Corsica* (1768) and in the last years of his life, for the 1791 biography of his friend Samuel Johnson.

During the course of his life, he met an amazing number of the great and powerful, of the literati, the philosophers, academics and advocates of his time. He died in May 1795 in London, following weeks of serious illness.

Discovered by scholars in the 1920s, Boswell's long-lost journals were one of the major literary discoveries of the 20th century. In his detailed and honest journal entries from the early 1760s until shortly before his death, we get his unique first-hand observations of life and personalities in the second half of the 18th century. Had he not written the *Life of Johnson*, his journals would still secure his fame for posterity.
**Timeline**

**October 29, 1740:** James Boswell is born in Edinburgh, the son of judge Alexander Boswell and Euphemia Erskine.

**1753-1758:** Boswell attends the University of Edinburgh.

**May 16, 1763:** James Boswell and Samuel Johnson met for the very first time, in Thomas Davies' bookshop near Covent Garden.

**1763-1764:** Boswell studies law in Utrecht.

**1764-1766:** Boswell goes on a Grand Tour of Europe, visiting numerous German courts, philosophers Rousseau and Voltaire and many Italian cities, before going to the interior of the wild island of Corsica, where he befriends the rebel leader Pasquale Paoli.

**1768:** Boswell gains some fame as the author of *An Account of Corsica*, which becomes very successful and is quickly translated into several languages.

**November 25, 1769:** Boswell marries his first cousin, the daughter of his father's sister, Margaret Montgomerie.

**1782:** Alexander Boswell, Lord Auchinleck, dies, leaving Auchinleck House to James.

**1785:** *The Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides* is published, as an edited version of the journal he wrote during his journey through Scotland with Dr. Johnson in 1773.

**June 4, 1789:** Margaret Montgomerie, Boswell's wife, dies while James is en route from London to Auchinleck.

**May 16, 1791:** *The Life of Johnson* is finally published after years of hard work.

**May 19, 1795:** James Boswell dies in his house on Gt. Portland Street in London, following weeks of serious illness.