

JP Donleavy, author of ‘The Ginger Man’, dies aged 91

Irish-American writer was best known for his novel ‘The Ginger Man’ which sold over 45m copies

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Sarah Burns



Irish-American author JP Donleavy has died aged 91. Donleavy, who was best-known for his 1955 novel ‘The Ginger Man’, is understood to have died on Monday at a hospital near his home in Mullingar, Co Westmeath. It is believed he suffered a stroke.



‘The Ginger Man’, which details the drunken exploits of a rowdy young American studying at Trinity College after the second World War sold over 45 million copies in two dozen languages.



It was banned under the eye of Archbishop Charles McQuaid in Ireland and remained so until the 1970s.

“It was an antagonistic time, because after the war, people were reorganising their lives, although it opened up society somewhat because people were going to pubs, and engaging in new friendships,” he said during an interview with *The Irish Times* in 2014.

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JP
Donleavy,
the
American
author,
seen at
Levington
Park, his
home in
Mullingar.
Photograph:
The New
York Times

“I was studying bacteriology - a grim business, and I had to go to a lot of autopsies. Dublin was a terrible place at the time. I used to walk through the slums, and in the houses you would see rats running across hallways, with doors torn off

“I was shocked to death by what I confronted. It was a very intimidating place.”

Donleavy was born in Brooklyn in 1926, the son of Irish immigrants. After serving in the second World War, he studied microbiology at Trinity College Dublin.

He lived in London and the Isle of Man during the 1950s and 1960s and moved to a farm Westmeath in 1969.

His work also included ‘*A Singular Man*’ (1963) and ‘*A Fairy Tale of New York*’ (1973).


He was also an accomplished painter with exhibitions on both sides of the Atlantic.

JP Donleavy's 'The Ginger Man' was banned in Ireland when it was published in 1945 and remained so until the 1970s. Photograph: The New York Times

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