

Origin of the name Hy-Breasal

Hy-Brazil or several other variants is a phantom island which features in many Irish myths. It was said to be cloaked in mist, except for one day each seven years, when it became visible but still could not be reached. The names *Brazil* and *Hy-Brazil* are thought to come from the Irish *Uí Breasail* (meaning "descendants (i.e., clan) of Breasal"), one of the ancient clans of northeastern Ireland. cf. Old Irish: *í*: island; *bres*: beauty, worth; great, mighty.

Hy-Brazil, is also spelled **Hy-Breasal**, **Hy-Breasil**, and related variations. The most distinctive geographical feature of *Hy-Brazil*, is that it appears on early maps as a perfect circle, with a semi-circular channel through the center. The circular perimeter of the island was confirmed by both Saints Barrind and Brendan, who separately walked the shore to determine where the island ended, but never found it. Most likely, they were walking in circles. The island has been visited by many people for centuries. Both Saint Barrind and Saint Brendan found the island on their respective voyages, and returned home with nearly identical descriptions of Hy-Brasil, which they dubbed the "Promised Land." They spent a day on the island, and returned with silver and gold given to them by an old man who lived there. Upon the return of the crew to Ireland, a second ship set out under the command of Alexander Johnson.

Hy-Brazil may be the reason that the South American country, Brazil, was so named. The central image on the Brazilian flag, a circle with a channel across the center, is the symbol for Hy-Brasil on early maps.

Regardless of the name or location, the island's history is consistent: It is the home of a wealthy and highly advanced civilization. Those who visited the island returned with tales of gold-roofed towers and domes, healthy cattle, and opulent citizens. One of the most famous visits to Hy-Brasil was in 1674 by Captain John Nisbet of Killybegs, Co. Donegal, Ireland. He and his crew were in familiar waters west of Ireland, when a fog came up. As the fog lifted, the ship was dangerously close to rocks. While getting their bearings, the ship anchored in three fathoms of water, and four crew members rowed ashore to visit Hy-Brasil. The last documented sighting of Hy-Brasil was in 1872, when author T. J. Westropp and several companions saw the island appear and then vanish. This was Mr. Westropp's third view of Hy-Brasil, but on this voyage he had brought his mother and some friends to verify the existence of Hy-Brasil.

Researchers and archaeologists have searched in the most likely locations west of Ireland, and there is evidence that islands existed there. Shallow-water shells have been found at Porcupine Bank, somewhat northwest of the most likely location of Hy-Brasil

Hy-Brasil was noted on maps as early as 1325, when Genoese cartographer Dalorto placed the island west of Ireland. On successive sailing charts, it appears southwest of Galway Bay.

Jack B. Yeats (b.1871-1857) painted an Oil on Canvas called 'A Race in Hy Brazil' in 1937, which depicts a horse race on a beach.