

**Report of a Planetable Survey of the Circular Feature
in “the Dell”, Brahan, Ross-shire**

April 16th 2016



The site viewed from the southwest

With the kind permission of Brahan Estate

Introduction

A project which aimed to produce a measured survey of the circular earthwork, GR centred on NH 52383 54412, in the Dell, at Brahan, Ross-shire, was carried out on April 16th 2016 by members of the North of Scotland Archaeological Society (NOSAS), a group of local enthusiastic amateur archaeologists. The feature was recorded in 2005 by M Marshall (Historic Environment Record ID: MHG55081), a report was produced at that time and it is not proposed to repeat the information given there, save for a brief description of the site.

The site is situated in the managed woodland (Canmore ID: 105407) associated with Brahan Castle, it is on a small natural knoll and has a steep bank running down to a burn on its west side. The circular earthbank encloses an area which measures 75m in diameter from top of bank to top of bank. The NE part of the internal area is reasonably flat but the south and west part slopes significantly downwards. The height of the surrounding bank is variable from 1m to 2m on its outside, but on its inside the bank is existent only in its NE arc where it is generally only 0.2 to 0.4m in height. There are 21 mature beech trees growing on the bank and 9 felled stumps; these appear to have been planted in 2 phases. Most of the older trees have rotted, fallen or been felled and are now represented by their stumps, the "younger" trees appear healthy although some have wind damage.

Many of the rhododendrons, which so invaded the site in the past, have recently been cleared and the relationship between the burial enclosure (HER: MHG 55127) with its angel statue (HER: MHG 44438, Canmore ID 105393) and the dog cemetery (HER: MHG 21481) within the internal area has become more apparent, also the two mature lime trees. Running through and around the enclosure there are several constructed pathways.

The site is clearly marked on the 1st edition OS map of 1877 as a circular area of woodland. It is depicted on a plan of "Proposed layout of gardens" of c1770 (NRAS RHP 1458) and annotated "Fine little Eminence called Beech Mount" and on a plan of "Survey of Brahan Policies", 1787 by David Aitken (NRAS RHP 142804) as a wooded circular feature annotated "Beech Mount".

The aim of the project was primarily to survey the circular earthbank with its beech trees and internal features using 5 linked planetable positions, but information and observations on the other features were noted too.

Members of the team: Meryl Marshall, Beth Blackburn, Tim Blackie, Anne Cockcroft, Anne Coombs, Paul and Anji Hancock, Steve and Madelaine Robinson, Roland Spencer-Jones, Alan Thomson.

MM July 2016



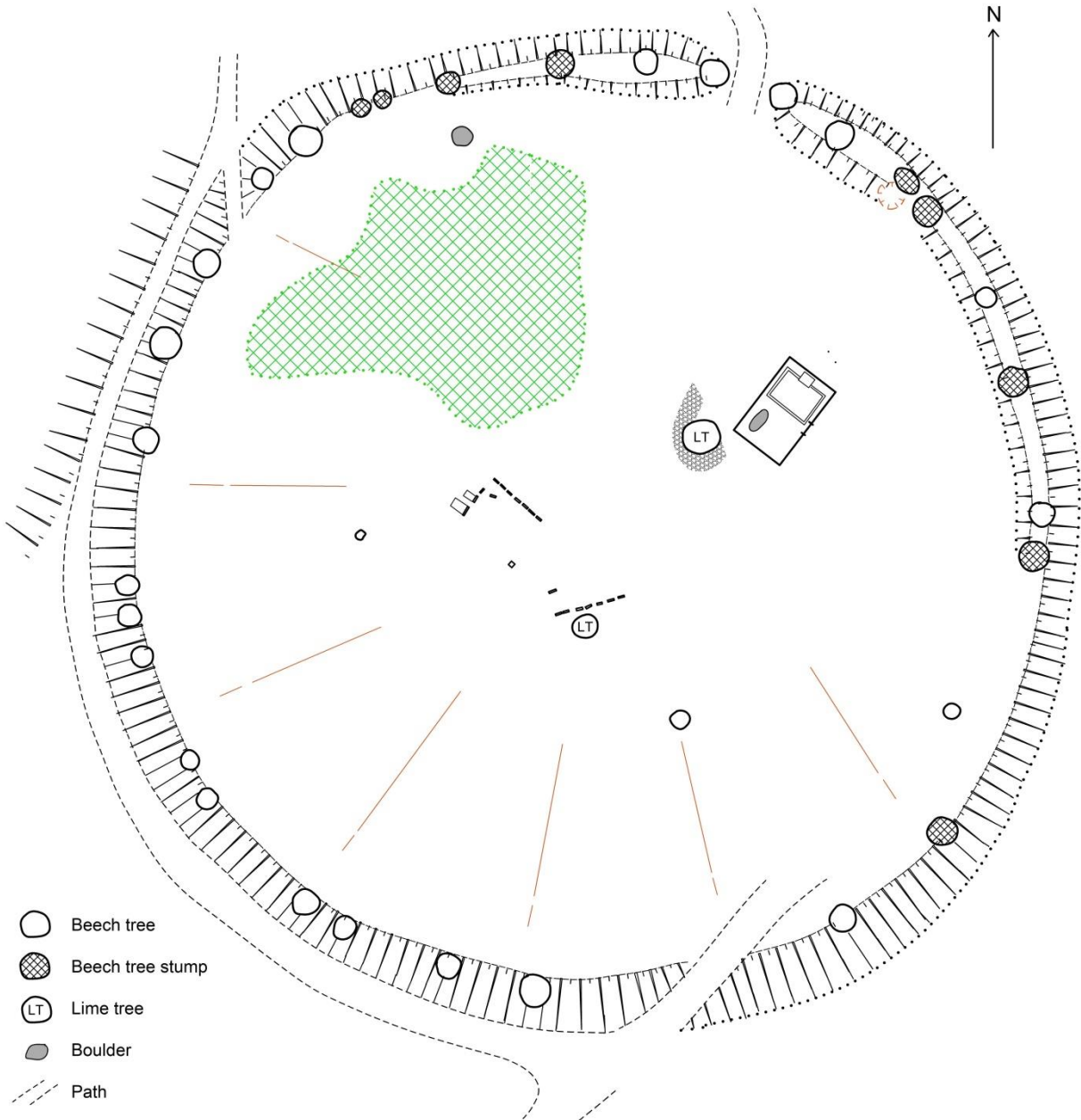
The internal area viewed from the NE with the burial enclosure and one of the lime trees (photographed Jan 2014)







Results

1. The Final Plan

The Dell, Brahan, Ross-shire
Circular earthwork, GR centred on NH 52383 54412
HER ID : MHG 55081

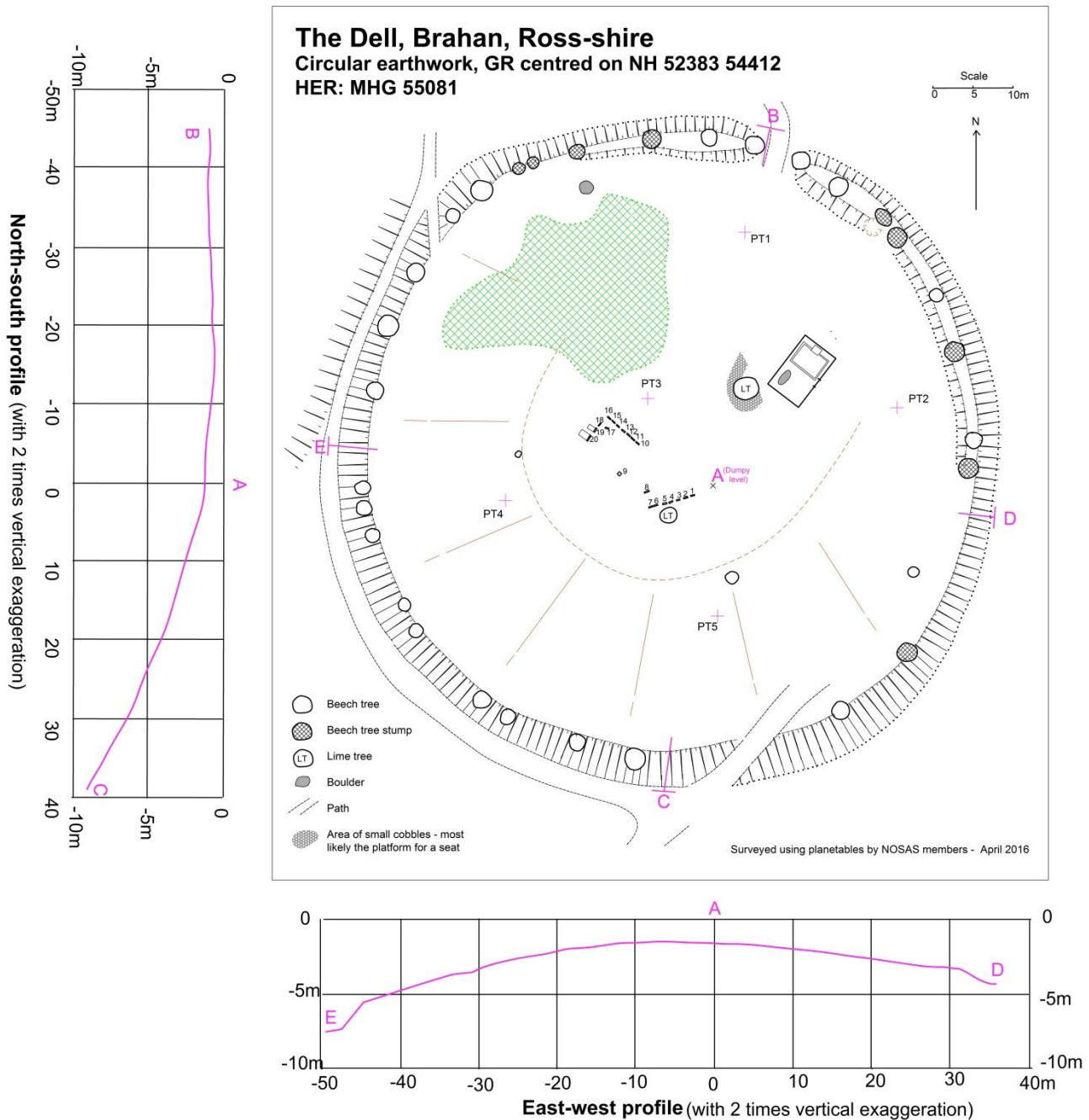
Scale
0 5 10m



-  Beech tree
-  Beech tree stump
-  Lime tree
-  Boulder
-  Path
-  Area of small cobbles - most likely the platform for a seat

Surveyed using planetables by NOSAS members - April 2016

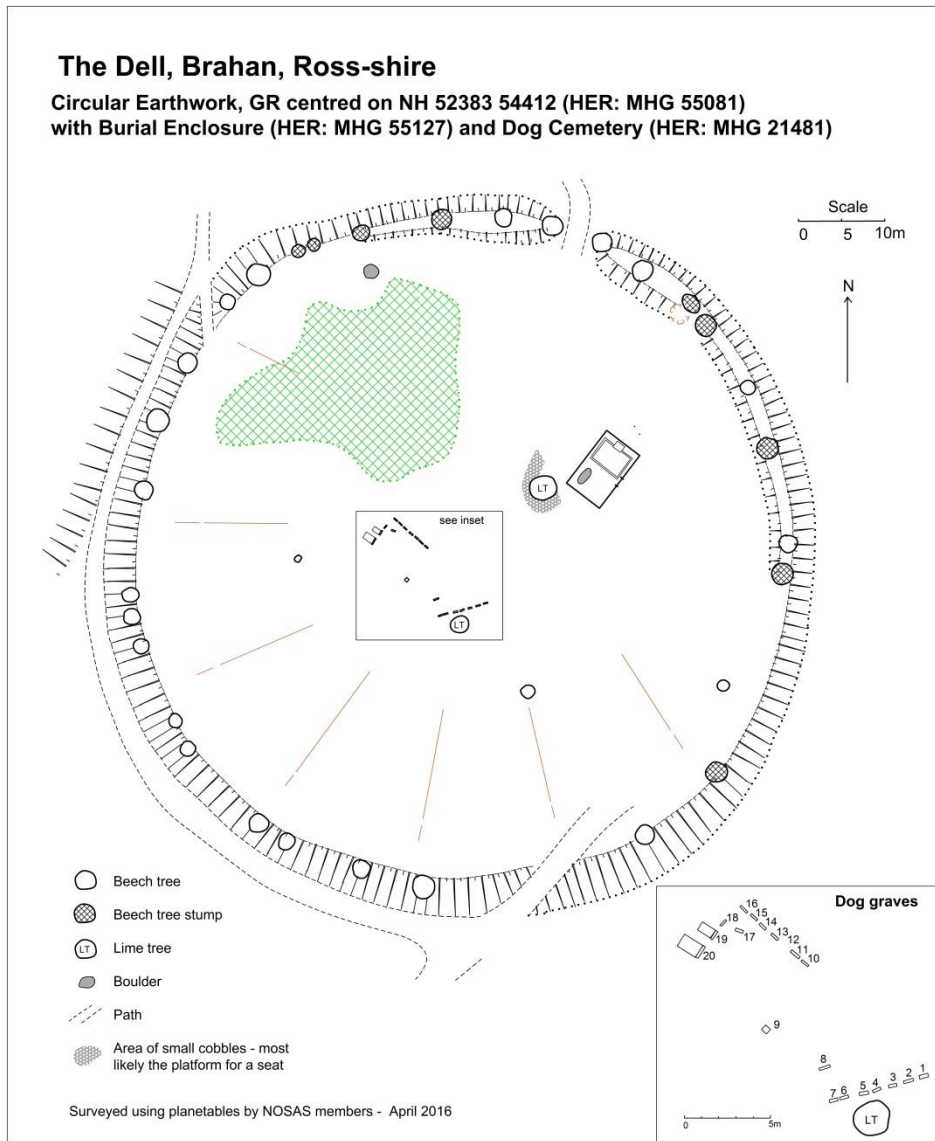
2. The plan with details of the profiles and planetable positions



Grid references of planetable positions

Description	Easting	Northing
PT1	N/02 51386	H/08 54436
PT2	N/02 51411	H/08 54415
PT3	N/02 51380	H/08 54416
PT4	N/02 51360	H/08 54398
PT5	N/02 51398	H/08 54386
Crossing point of sections (A)	N/02 51386	H/08 54407

3. The plan with details of the internal features of the circular enclosure



The burial enclosure with the angel statue viewed from the SW (Jan 2014)

The lime trees and the cobbled platform

Two mature lime trees are located in the central area. The larger NE tree has a diameter of 2m(N-S) x 3m(E-W) and a circumference of circa 7m at waist (1m) height; at this point it splits into 2 substantial parts suggesting that it may have been "pollarded". Around the base of the tree, on its south and west sides, a platform of small cobbles has been laid. It is 1 to 1.5m in width and has a well-defined outer edge; the inner edge however has been disrupted by the growing girth of the lime tree. This platform is probably the site of a seat.



The northwest part of the platform viewed from the north (April 2016)



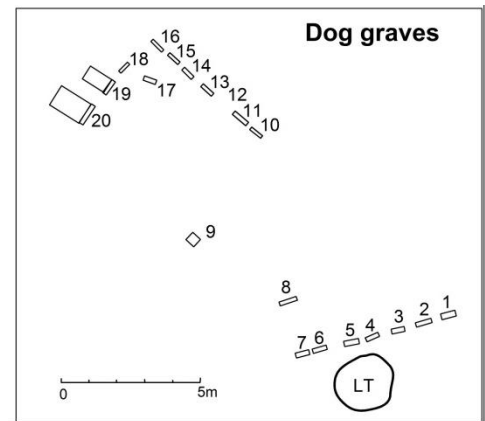
The south part of the platform viewed from the south (April 2016)

The Dog Cemetery

Inscriptions

- 1 BIJOU DIED 17TH OCTR 1879
- 2 SIMON DIED DECEMBER 1874
- 3 BROGGIE DIED 30TH SEPT 1872
- 4 JACK DIED 17TH OCTR 1870
- 5 UNDERNEATH THIS SCULPTURED STONE LIE MY BLESSED WALDMENS BONES (*dog sculpture across top of stone*)
- 6 FRITZ DIED SEPT 30TH 1889 AGED 13
- 7 SPOT DIED OCTOBER 7TH 1890 AGED 12 YEARS
- 8 TORRAN DIED JULY 1892
- 9 GILL 1963-75 WATTLE 1974-85 WALKABOUT 1980-92
- 10 SHANG DIED APRIL 8TH 1922 AGED 14 YEARS
- 11 TORRIE DIED 1918 AGED 15
- 12 PEIHO DIED OCT 5TH 1901? AGED 18
- 13 VICEY DIED JUNE 3RD 1898 AGED 17
- 14 LITTLE PETE DIED SEPT 14 1918 AGED FOUR
- 15 IN MEMORY OF DEAR SCAMP (WEE PETTY) DIED 6TH MAY 1924 AGED 15 YEARS
- 16 OR PET SALLY BORN 10TH AUGUST 1914 DIED 3RD JULY 1925
- 17 IN LOVING MEMORY OF LITTLE BULL (SO FAITHFUL) DIED 26TH JULY 1925 AGED 23 YEARS
- 18 IN MEMORY OF JOCK A FAITHFUL AND LOVING FRIEND DIED OCT 24 1913 AGED 13 YEARS
- 19 DUKE DIED FEB 23RD 1910 AGED 12
- 20 IN MEMORY OF CRUISER FOR FIFTEEN YEARS THE FAITHFUL FRIEND AND COMPANION OF COLONEL STEWART MACKENZIE OF SEAFORTH HE ACCOMPANIED THE 9TH LANCERS THROUGHOUT THE AFGHAN CAMPAIGNS 1878-79-80 INCLUDING THE MARCH FROM KABUL TO KANDAHAR BORN 1878 DIED 1893

(crossed flags with 9 in relief above engraving stone/concrete setting in front of gravestone)



The south group – 1 to 8, the smaller lime tree is seen behind the stones (Jan 2014)



The north group – 10 to 20 (Jan 2014)