

Integral Isosceles Triangle-Parallelogram and Heron triangle-Rhombus Pairs with a Common Area and Common Perimeter

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Abstract

In this paper we show that there are infinitely many pairs of integer isosceles triangles and integer parallelograms with a common (integral) area and common perimeter. We also show that there are infinitely many Heron triangles and integer rhombuses with common area and common perimeter. As a corollary, we show there does not exist any Heron triangle and integer square which have a common area and common perimeter.

Keywords: Elliptic Curve, Isosceles Triangle, Heron Triangle, Parallelogram, Rhombus, Common Area, Common Perimeter
2010 MSC: 11D25, 11G05

1. Introduction

The study of geometrical objects is a very ancient problem. There are many questions in number theory which are related to triangles, rectangles,

squares, polygons, and so forth. For example, there is the well-known congruent number problem which asks: given a positive integer n , does there exist a right triangle with rational side lengths whose area is n ? As a second example, several researchers have related various types of triangles and quadrilaterals to the theory of elliptic curves. Both Goins and Maddox [5] and Dujella and Peral [4] constructed elliptic curves over \mathbb{Q} coming from Heron triangles. Izadi, Khoshnam, and Moody later generalized their notions to Heron quadrilaterals [7]. In [9] Naskrecki constructed elliptic curves associated to Pythagorean triplets, and Izadi et. al. similarly studied curves arising from Brahmagupta quadrilaterals [8].

Another problem connecting geometrical objects with number theory is devoted to the construction of triangles with area, perimeter or side lengths with certain arithmetic properties. Bill Sands asked his colleague R.K. Guy if there were triangles with integer sides associated with rectangles having the same perimeter and area. In 1995, Guy [6] showed that the answer was affirmative, but that there is no non-degenerate right triangle and rectangle pair with the same property. In that same paper, Guy also showed that there are infinitely many such isosceles triangle and rectangle pairs. Several other works in this direction have been solved, all involving pairs of geometric shapes having a common area and common perimeter: two distinct Heron triangles by A. Bremner [1], Heron triangle and rectangle pairs by R. K. Guy and Bremner [2], integer right triangle and parallelogram pairs by Y. Zhang [13], and integer right triangle and rhombus pairs by S. Chern [3].

In this paper we continue this line of study. The first problem we examine regards integer isosceles triangles and integer parallelograms which share a common area and common perimeter. We then consider Heron triangle and integer rhombus pairs. Using the theory of elliptic curves we are able to prove that there are infinitely many examples of each type.

2. Integral Isosceles Triangle and Parallelogram Pairs

We first address the case of integral isosceles triangles and parallelograms which have a common (integral) area and common perimeter. As we are requiring the area of the isosceles triangle to be integral, then necessarily the altitude to the non-isosceles side of the triangle must be rational. By the general solution to the Pythagorean equation, we may take the equal legs of the isosceles triangle to have length $m^2 + n^2$, with the base being $2(m^2 - n^2)$

and the altitude $2mn$, for some rational m, n . The perimeter of the triangle is $4m^2$, with an area of $2mn(m^2 - n^2)$. See Figure 1.

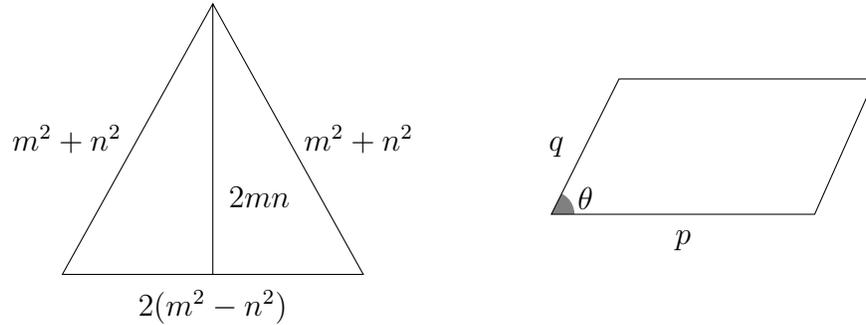


Figure 1: An isosceles triangle and parallelogram

For the parallelogram, we let p, q be the consecutive side lengths, with their intersection angle θ . The perimeter of the parallelogram is $2(p + q)$, while the area is $pq \sin \theta$. In order for the two areas to be equal, then $\sin \theta$ must necessarily be rational. We assume a stronger condition, namely that $\sin \theta = 2t/(1 + t^2)$, from which it follows that $\cos \theta = (1 - t^2)/(1 + t^2)$ is also rational¹. So we will actually produce isosceles triangles with the same area and perimeter as parallelograms whose angles have rational values for sine and cosine. We call a polygon θ -integral if the polygon has integer side lengths, integral area, and its interior angles have rational values for sine and cosine.

Theorem 2.1. *Let $P = (X, Y)$ be a rational point on the elliptic curve*

$$Y^2 = X^3 - 16t^2(1 + t^2)^2X + 64t^4(1 + t^2)^2 \quad (1)$$

such that

$$0 < |X| < 4t(1 + t^2), \quad Y < 8t^2(1 + t^2) \quad (2)$$

¹We note that if we do not require $\sin \theta$ and $\cos \theta$ to both be rational, it is trivial to produce a parallelogram with the same perimeter and same area as any given triangle. If a given triangle has perimeter P and area A , we could simply set $p = q = P/4$. Then for the areas to be equal, we would need $(P^2/16) \sin \theta = A$, or in other words $\theta = \sin^{-1}(16A/P^2)$. In order for $\cos \theta$ to be rational, an easy calculation shows that $P^4 - 16A^2$ would need to be square, a condition which will not hold in general.

for some rational $0 < t \leq 1$. Then there exists infinitely many integer isosceles triangle and θ -integral parallelogram pairs with a common area and a common perimeter for this value of t , i.e. with $\sin \theta = 2t/(1+t^2)$.

Proof. Equating the perimeters and areas, then we have

$$\begin{aligned} 2mn(m^2 - n^2) &= pq \sin \theta, \\ 2m^2 &= p + q, \end{aligned} \tag{3}$$

where θ is chosen such that $\sin \theta = f(t) = 2t/(1+t^2)$, with t a positive rational number. Since $f(t) = f(1/t)$ we may assume that $0 < t \leq 1$.

Equation (3) can be transformed into a family of elliptic curves as follows. Starting with

$$(p - q)^2 = (p + q)^2 - 4pq,$$

then from equation (3), we obtain

$$(p - q)^2 = 4m^4 - 8mn(m^2 - n^2)(t^2 + 1)/(2t),$$

or equivalently

$$((p - q)/(m^2))^2 = 4 - 4((n/m) - (n/m)^3)((1 + t^2)/t).$$

Setting $\frac{p-q}{m^2} = \frac{Y}{4t^2(1+t^2)}$ and $\frac{n}{m} = \frac{X}{4t(1+t^2)}$, the resulting equation becomes

$$E_t : Y^2 = X^3 - 16t^2(1+t^2)^2X + 64t^4(1+t^2)^2. \tag{4}$$

The discriminant of E_t is

$$\Delta(t) = -2^{12}(1+t^2)^4(4t^4 - 19t^2 + 4).$$

For rational $0 < t \leq 1$, $\Delta(t) \neq 0$, hence E_t is nonsingular and defines an elliptic curve.

It is easy to check the following three rational points are on E_t :

$$P_1(t) = (0, 8t^2(1+t^2)),$$

$$P_2(t) = (-4t(t^2 - 1), 8t^2(t^2 + 2t - 1)),$$

$$P_3(t) = (4(t^2 + 1), 8(t^2 + 1)^2).$$

In fact, we can show these three points are independent, and that the rank of E_t over $\mathbb{Q}(t)$ is ≥ 3 for all but finitely many values of t . We do so using

the Silverman Specialization Theorem [11, Theorem 11.4]. If we find a value $t = t_0$ such that $P_1(t_0), P_2(t_0)$, and $P_3(t_0)$ are linearly independent on E_{t_0} , then the three points $P_1(t), P_2(t)$, and $P_3(t)$ are necessarily independent over $\mathbb{Q}(t)$. Setting $t_0 = 3$, the curve E_3 is then $y^2 = x^3 - 14400x + 518400$, with the three points $(0, 720), (-96, 1008), (40, 80)$. We check they are independent by computing the determinant of their height pairing matrix, which is non-zero ≈ 0.3266 , as computed by SAGE [10]. Thus the rank of E_t is at least 3 (over $\mathbb{Q}(t)$), and we have that there are infinitely many points on E_t , for all but finitely many values of t .

Given a point (X, Y) on the curve E_t , we can reverse the correspondence to construct the isosceles triangle and parallelogram pairs. From the transformations used above, we have

$$n = \frac{mX}{4t(t^2 + 1)}, \quad p = \frac{m^2(8t^4 + 8t^2 + Y)}{8t^2(t^2 + 1)},$$

and

$$q = \frac{m^2(8t^4 + 8t^2 - Y)}{8t^2(t^2 + 1)}.$$

The sides of the isosceles triangle then become (up to scaling by the factor m^2),

$$\left\{ \frac{X^2 + 16t^2(t^2 + 1)^2}{16t^2(t^2 + 1)^2}, \frac{X^2 + 16t^2(t^2 + 1)^2}{16t^2(t^2 + 1)^2}, -\frac{X^2 - 16t^2(t^2 + 1)^2}{8t^2(t^2 + 1)^2} \right\}.$$

The sides (p, q) of the parallelogram are given by

$$\left(\frac{(8t^4 + 8t^2 + Y)}{8t^2(t^2 + 1)}, \frac{8t^4 + 8t^2 - Y}{8t^2(t^2 + 1)} \right).$$

In order for all the side lengths to be positive rational numbers, we need the conditions

$$0 < |X| < 4t(t^2 + 1), \quad Y < 8t^2(t^2 + 1)$$

to be satisfied.

To show there are infinitely many rational points on E_t meeting these constraints, we use a theorem of Poincaré and Hurwitz (see [12, p. 78]) about the density of rational points. Their theorem states that if an elliptic curve $E(\mathbb{Q})$ has positive rank and at most one torsion point of order two,

then the set $E(\mathbb{Q})$ is dense in $E(\mathbb{R})$. The same result holds if E has three torsion points of order two, under the assumption that we have a rational point of infinite order on the bounded branch of the set $E(\mathbb{R})$. The curve E_t always has one real 2-torsion point. We note that if the curve E_t has three real points of order two (for some $0 < t \leq 1$), then the point $(0, 8t^2(1+t^2))$ is easily seen to be a point of infinite order on the bounded branch. Thus, if there is a rational point P satisfying equation (2), then E_t has infinitely many rational points satisfying equation (2) by the density theorem. \square

Corollary 2.2. *For every rational number $0 < t \leq 1$, there are infinitely many pairs of integer isosceles triangles and θ -integral parallelograms which have a common area and a common perimeter, with $\sin \theta = 2t/(1+t^2)$.*

Proof. Given any rational $0 < t \leq 1$, note the point $P(t) = (4t^2, 8t^3)$ is on the curve E_t . Considering its x and y -coordinates, we see that $X = 4t^2 > 0$ for all $t = 0$, and also that $|X| = 4t^2 < 4t(1+t^2)$ which is true for all $0 < t \leq 1$. In addition, we have $Y = 8t^3 < 8t^2(1+t^2)$ which is similarly always true for $0 < t \leq 1$.

Thus the conditions of Theorem 2.1 are satisfied by the point P for this value of t , and the conclusion immediately follows. \square

As a special case of the corollary, we have a new proof of the following result, first established by Guy [6].

Corollary 2.3. *There are infinitely many integer isosceles triangles and integer rectangles which have a common (integral) area and common perimeter.*

Proof. By setting $t = 1$, then $\theta = \pi/2$, and the parallelogram is a rectangle. The result is immediate from Corollary 2.2. \square

We can use the proof of Corollary 2.2 to produce explicit examples of the desired isosceles triangles and parallelograms. Using $X = 4t^2$ and $Y = 8t^3$, we find that (after re-scaling) the sides of the isosceles triangle may be taken to be

$$\{1 + 3t^2 + t^4, 1 + 3t^2 + t^4, 2(1 + t^2 + t^4)\},$$

and the corresponding sides of the parallelogram are

$$\{(1 + t + t^2)(1 + t^2), (1 - t + t^2)(1 + t^2)\}.$$

The perimeter of each is $4(1+t^2)^2$, while the area is $2t(1+t^2)(1-t+t^2)(1+t+t^2)$.

As a concrete example, take $t = 1/2$, or equivalently $t = 2$. The resulting integer isosceles triangle has sides $\{29, 29, 42\}$ and the θ -integral parallelogram has sides $\{15, 35\}$ with angle $\theta = \sin^{-1}(4/5)$. The triangle and parallelogram each have a perimeter of 100, and an area of 420.

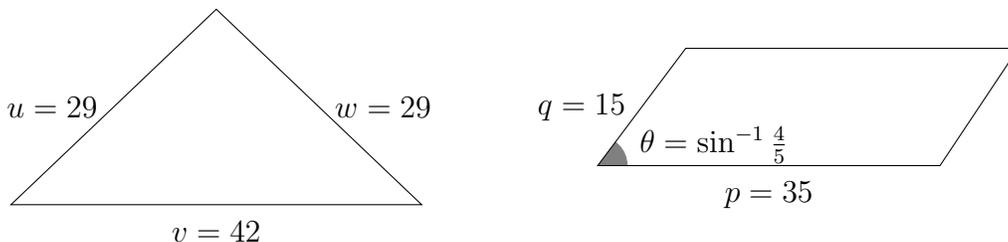


Figure 2: An example of an integral isosceles triangle and parallelogram, both of which have a perimeter of 100 and an area of 420.

We similarly can set $t = 1$ to obtain an isosceles triangle and rectangle pair. In this case, the triangle has side lengths $\{5, 5, 6\}$ with a perimeter of 16 and an area of 12. The rectangle with the same perimeter and area has sides of length 2 and 6.

3. Integral Heron Triangle and Rhombus Pairs

In this section, we prove the result that there are infinitely many pairs of Heron triangles and θ -integral rhombus pairs which have both a common area and common perimeter. Recall that a Heron triangle is a triangle whose side lengths and area are all integers. Every Heron triangle, as proved by Brahmagupta, has the sides of the form

$$(v + w)(u^2 - vw), v(u^2 + w^2), w(u^2 + v^2) \quad ,$$

where $u, v, w \in \mathbb{Z}$.

Let p be the length of the side of the rhombus, and θ its smallest interior angle. As before, we require the rhombus to be θ -integral, or in other words, that both $\sin \theta$ and $\cos \theta$ are rational. Hence, we may write $\sin \theta = 2t/(t^2+1)$, for some $0 < t \leq 1$.

Theorem 3.1. *Let $Q = (X, Y)$ be a rational point on the elliptic curve*

$$E'_t : Y^2 + 4(1 + t^2)XY + 16t^2(1 + t^2)Y = X^3 \quad (5)$$

such that

$$4(1+t^2)Y > X^2, \quad (6)$$

for some rational $0 < t \leq 1$. If the point Q is not of finite order, then there exist infinitely many Heron triangle and θ -integral rhombus pairs with a common area and a common perimeter for this value of t , i.e. with $\sin \theta = 2t/(1+t^2)$.

Proof. If we equate the perimeters and areas of the Heron triangle and θ -integral rhombus, then

$$\begin{aligned} uvw(v+w)(u^2 - vw) &= p^2 \sin \theta, \\ u^2(v+w) &= 2p. \end{aligned} \quad (7)$$

Combining these equations (7), and writing $\sin \theta = 2t/(1+t^2)$, we get

$$uvw(v+w)(u^2 - vw) = \frac{2tu^4(v+w)^2}{4(1+t^2)}.$$

Setting $X_1 = \frac{w}{u}$, $Y_1 = \frac{2tw}{v}$, and noting that $\frac{2tX_1}{Y_1} = \frac{v}{u}$, the equation immediately above transforms into

$$Y_1^2 - 4(1+t^2)X_1Y_1 + 2tY_1 = -8t(1+t^2)X_1^3. \quad (8)$$

Multiplying by $(8t(1+t^2))^2$, and substituting $X_2 = -8t(1+t^2)X_1$ and $Y_2 = 8t(1+t^2)Y_1$, we end up with

$$E_t : Y_2^2 + 4(1+t^2)X_2Y_2 + 16t^2(1+t^2)Y_2 = X_2^3. \quad (9)$$

The discriminant of E_t is

$$\Delta(t) = 2^{16}t^6(1+t^2)^4(4t^4 - 19t^2 + 4).$$

For rational $0 < t \leq 1$, $\Delta(t) \neq 0$, hence E_t is non-singular and defines an elliptic curve. We note that the curve E_t has no obvious rational points. In comparison to E_t of Theorem 2.1, the curve E_t frequently has rank 0, meaning there are not infinitely many rational points.

Working the correspondence backwards, we find that after scaling we may take $(u, v, w) = (Y_1, 2tX_1, X_1Y_1)$. Re-scaling again, some straightforward calculation leads to the sides of the Heron triangle being

$$(Y_1 + 2t)(Y_1 - 2tX_1^2), 2tY_1(1 + X_1^2), Y_1^2 + 4t^2X_1^2, \quad ,$$

and the side of the rhombus as $Y_1(Y_1 + 2t)/2$.

In order for the rhombus to have positive side length, we need $Y_1 > 0$ or $Y_1 < -2t$. If we require $Y_1 < -2t$, then the Heron triangle side length $2tY_1(1 + X_1^2)$ is always negative. If instead we take $Y_1 > 0$, then two of the three triangle sides are necessarily positive, with the third side being $(Y_1 + 2t)(Y_1 - 2tX_1^2)$. We thus take as our condition the inequality $Y_1 > 2tX_1^2$. In terms of X_2, Y_2 , this is

$$4(1 + t^2)Y_2 > X_2^2.$$

By the same density argument as used in Theorem 2.1, we can conclude that if we have a point (X_2, Y_2) of infinite order on E_t satisfying the inequality, then we will have infinitely many pairs of integer Heron triangles and θ -integral rhombuses which have a common area and common perimeter. \square

In contrast to Corollary 2.2, we are not able to show that for every value of t , $0 < t < 1$, we can produce infinitely many pairs of integer Heron triangles and rhombuses with our desired properties. The difficulty comes when the rank of E_t is 0. However, we can show there are infinitely many values of t for which the hypotheses of the previous theorem are satisfied.

Corollary 3.2. *For infinitely many values of t , with $0 < t < 0.4292535$, there exist infinitely many integer Heron triangle and θ -integral rhombus pairs with a common area and a common perimeter.*

Proof. We begin by showing that E_t has positive rank for infinitely many rational values of t . Suppose we require $X = -16t^2(t^2 + 1)$ to be the x -coordinate of a rational point on E_t . This constraint is equivalent to requiring $-(48t^4 + 40t^2 - 9)$ to be square. The equation $z^2 = -48t^4 - 40t^2 + 9$ is birationally equivalent to the elliptic curve

$$E : y^2 = x^3 - x^2 + 5x - 14,$$

via the maps

$$x = -\frac{4t^2 + 3z - 9}{8t^2}, \quad y = \frac{3(20t^2 + 3z - 9)}{16t^3},$$

and

$$t = \frac{3y}{2(x^2 + x + 7)}, \quad z = \frac{3(x^2 - 4x - 9)}{x^2 + x + 7}.$$

The curve E has rank 1, with generator $(6, 14)$ and therefore has an infinite number of rational points (x, y) . From which, we obtain an infinite number of values of t for which X will be a valid x -coordinate of a rational point on E_t . It is easy to check this point (X, Y) has infinite order, showing an infinite number of values of t for which E_t has positive rank.

The upper bound we use for t comes from solving $-48t^4 - 40t^2 + 9 = z^2 > 0$, which results in $|t| < \sqrt{-15 + 6\sqrt{13}}/6 \approx 0.4292535$. In order for $0 < t < 0.4292535$ as desired, we note first that $x^2 + x + 7 = 9(x + 1/2)^2 + 27/4$ and so is always positive. The condition $0 < t < 0.4292535$ is thus the values of t which result from points (x, y) on the curve E which satisfy $y > 0$ and also lie below the parabola $(3/2)y = .4292535(x^2 + x + 7)$. Some straightforward algebra shows that the curve and parabola never intersect and that E is always below the parabola. We thus obtain infinitely many values for t , with $0 < t < 0.4292535$, such that E_t has positive rank.

The point with x -coordinate $X = -16t^2(1 + t^2)$ corresponds to $X_1 = 2t$ on the curve defined by (8). We claim that the resulting point (X_1, Y_1) will always satisfy the inequality $Y_1 > 2tX_1^2$, which (as we saw in the proof of the Theorem 3.1) is equivalent to (6).

The point on E_t with x -coordinate $X = -16t^2(t^2 + 1)$ is (X, Y) , with $Y = 8t^2(t^2 + 1)(3 + 4t^2 \pm z)$. The inequality we need to check is $X^2 < 4(1 + t^2)Y$, or equivalently

$$256t^4(t^2 + 1)^2 - 32t^2(t^2 + 1)^2(3 + 4t^2 \pm z) < 0,$$

which simplifies to just $4t^2 - 3 < \pm z$. We note that

$$\begin{aligned} 0 < z^2 &= -48t^4 - 40t^2 + 9 \\ &= -3(4t^2 - 3)^2 - 28(4t^2 - 3) - 48, \end{aligned}$$

and so necessarily $4t^2 - 3 < 0$. Thus, for any point (t, z) satisfying $z^2 = -48t^4 - 40t^2 - 9$, the pullback to E_t (9) of either (t, z) or $(t, -z)$ will satisfy $X^2 < 4(1 + t^2)Y$.

We have shown that we have infinitely many values of t , with $0 < t < .4292535$ such that the curve E_t has positive rank. For each of these values of t , (6) will be satisfied by (X, Y) . We observe that (X, Y) does not have finite order by specialization. For $t = 3/7$, then we can take $z = 9/49$ and so $(X, Y) = (-8352/2401, 801792/117649)$. The point (X, Y) is easily checked to have infinite order on $E_{3/7}$. The conclusion then immediately follows from Theorem 3.1. \square

We remark that it is possible to extend the result of the corollary slightly, increasing the upper bound to $(3\sqrt{3} - \sqrt{11})/4 \approx 0.46988$. For the range of values of t in the interval $0.46988 < t \leq 1$, the discriminant of E_t satisfies $\Delta(t) < 0$ and the curve only has one connected component. A careful analysis shows the infinite (and only) component of (8) lies beneath $y = 2tx^2$. We therefore cannot find any rational points which will satisfy (6). We also note the choice of $X = -16t^2(t^2 + 1)$ was not the only possible choice. Other choices of X which lead to a positive rank curve E would work as well. We chose X so that $X_1 = X / (-8t(1 + t^2))$ would have a simple expression.

We now give a concrete example of a Heron triangle and an integer rhombus.

Example 3.3. *Corresponding to the generator (6, 14), we get $t = 3/7$, and thus $(X_1, Y_1) = (6/7, 576/343)$. This leads to a Heron triangle with sides $(a, b, c) = (145, 136, 183)$ and the rhombus with side $p = 116$, and $\theta = \sin^{-1} = 21/29$. Both shapes have perimeter 464 and area 9744.*

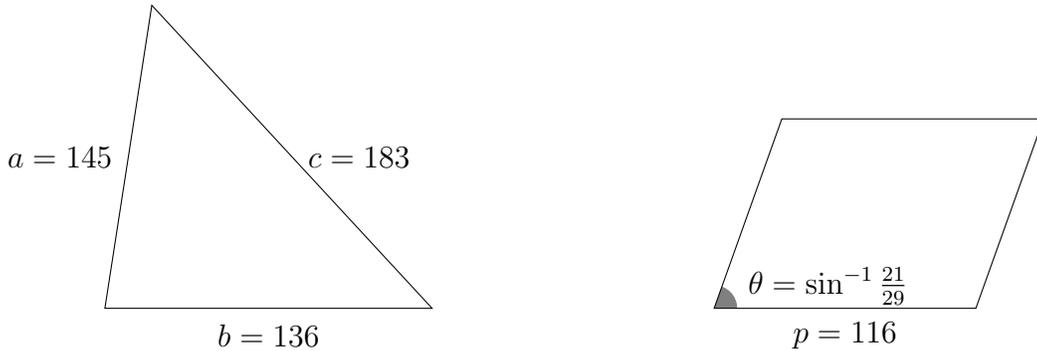


Figure 3: An example of an integral Heron triangle and Rhombus, both of which have a perimeter of 464 and an area of 9744.

Corollary 3.4. *There is no pair of integer Heron triangle and integer square with the same area and same perimeter.*

Proof. We utilize the proof of Theorem 3.1. As a square has right angles, then $\sin \theta = 1$, and thus $t = 1$. We therefore put $t = 1$, in (9), and we have

$$E_1 : y^2 + 8xy + 32y = x^3. \quad (10)$$

As computed by SAGE [10], the rank of E_1 is zero and its torsion subgroup is isomorphic to \mathbb{Z}_3 , with points of order three $(0, 0)$ and $(0, -32)$. If we map back these points via the transformations (8) and (9), we are led to $X_1 = 0$ and so $w = 0$, which is a degenerate case. Thus there is no solution. \square

4. Conclusion

We have proved that there are infinitely many pairs of isosceles triangle and θ -integral parallelogram pairs with common area and common perimeter. We have also shown that there are infinitely many Heron triangle and θ -integral rhombus pairs with the same property, while there does not exist any such Heron triangle and square pair.

In this direction, a more general question remains to be answered which asks whether there exists pairs of Heron triangles and (non-rhombus) parallelograms with a common area and common perimeter. This is also discussed in [13] and a partial solution in the affirmative is also given there.

We conclude by noting that while proving theorem 2.1, we showed that the rank of E_t , is greater than or equal to 3 for infinitely many values of t . Therefore, it might be interesting to find whether there exist curves in this family with high rank. We performed some experiments, and the curves with the highest rank we found had rank 5.

5. Acknowledgement

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewer who gave a method which simplified the proof of Corollary 3.2. The second author also sincerely thanks the Harish-Chandra Research Institute, Allahabad for providing research facilities to pursue his research work. In particular, he expresses appreciation to his supervisors Prof. Kalyan Chakraborty and Prof. Shiv Datt Kumar for their support, and Prof. Andrew Bremner for some thoughtful discussions.

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