syn-Benzene dioxides: chemoenzymatic synthesis from 2,3-*cis*-dihydrodiol derivatives of monosubstituted benzenes and their application in the synthesis of regioisomeric 1,2- and 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols and 1,4-dioxocins[†]

Derek R. Boyd,*^{a,b} Narain D. Sharma,^{a,b} Nuria M. Llamas,^a Colin R. O'Dowd^a and Christopher C. R. Allen^c

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cis-2,3-Dihydrodiol metabolites of monosubstituted halobenzenes and toluene have been used as synthetic precursors of the corresponding 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols. Enantiopure *syn*-benzene dioxide intermediates were reduced to the 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols and thermally racemised *via* the corresponding 1,4-dioxocins. The *syn*-benzene dioxide–1,4-dioxocin valence tautomeric equilibrium ratio was found to be dependent on the substituent position. The methodology has also been applied to the synthesis of both enantiomers of the 1,2-(*ipso*)- and 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols of toluene. This chemoenzymatic approach thus makes available, for the first time, all three possible *cis*-dihydrodiol regioisomers of a monosubstituted benzene.

Introduction

Toluene **1e**, the most abundant anthropogenic hydrocarbon in the environment, is typical of many substituted benzene compounds that are readily biodegraded by wild-type soil bacteria *e.g. Pseudomonas putida*. The initial steps in the oxidative metabolism of toluene **1e** by whole cells of *P. putida* involve (i) toluene dioxygenase (TDO)-catalysed production of the corresponding *cis*-dihydrodiol **2e**_s and (ii) toluene diol dehydrogenase (TDD)-

^aSchool of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering, The Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, UK BT9 5AG. E-mail: dr.boyd@qub.ac.uk; Tel: +44 (0)2890 974421

^bCenTACat, The Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, UK BT9 5AG

^cSchool of Biological Sciences, The Queen's University of Belfast, Belfast, UK BT9 5AG

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catalysed dehydrogenation of the *cis*-dihydrodiol to yield catechol **3e**, prior to mineralization (Scheme 1). Both TDO and TDD enzymes are extremely versatile in their substrate range and are therefore also capable of catalysing the dihydroxylation and dehydrogenation of other monosubstituted benzenes (*e.g.* **1a**–d) to give the corresponding *cis*-dihydrodiols (**2a**_s–**d**_s) and catechols (**3a**–**d**) respectively.

TDO-catalysed oxidation at the 2,3-bond of the aromatic ring of toluene **1e** (X = Me), in common with many other monosubstituted benzene substrates *e.g.* **1b–d**, was found to yield the enantiopure *cis*-dihydrodiol metabolite **2e**_S having an (S) configuration at the chiral centre further from the substituent (X). Relatively high yields of the accumulated *cis*-dihydrodiols **2a–e** (>10 g L⁻¹) can be obtained when mutant strains of *P. putida, e.g.* 39D or UV4 (with TDD enzyme activity blocked)¹⁻⁵ or when *E. coli* recombinant strains with TDO enzyme incorporated, *e.g.* JM109(pDTG601),⁶ JM109(pKST11)⁷ or DH5 α (pDTG927)⁸



(with TDD activity absent) are used. The toluene metabolite $2e_s$ was the first member of the chiral *cis*-dihydrodiol family to be isolated and identified,¹ and to date more than 300 other examples have been found as a result of dioxygenase-catalysed *cis*-dihydroxylation of both mono- and poly-cyclic arenes.⁹⁻¹³

The TDO enzyme has also been, by far, the most widely used biocatalyst for the formation of substituted benzene cisdihydrodiol bioproducts. Despite TDO being involved in biotransformations of a diverse range of monosubstituted benzene substrates 1 (>70), a remarkable degree of regioselectivity (*cis*dihydroxylation of the 2,3-bond of the arene substrate 1) and stereoselectivity (cis-dihydroxylation from the Si-Si face to yield the 1S diol enantiomer) has been observed. Only in the case of fluorobenzene 1a, a detectable proportion (ca. 20%) of the unnat*ural* 1*R cis*-dihydrodiol enantiomer $2a_R$ was observed.⁴ Differing proportions of the minor 1R enantiomer have also been observed, when using chlorobenzene dioxygenase as biocatalyst with several monosubstituted benzene substrates including cinnamonitrile (3%, 1R), benzonitrile (6%, 1R), benzylcyanide (22%, 1R).¹⁴ To date, no example of the TDO-catalysed cis-dihydroxylation of either the 3,4-bond (to yield diols 4) or the 1,2-bond of arene 1 (to yield diols 5) has been found and thus these unnatural cisdihydrodiol regioisomers and enantiomers $(\mathbf{2}_R, \mathbf{4}_R, \mathbf{4}_S, \mathbf{5}_R, \mathbf{5}_S)$ are not generally available by direct biotransformation.

One example of a *cis*-dihydrodiol of type 4, resulting from *cis*dihydroxylation at the 3,4-bond of a monosubstituted benzene, was found using biphenyl as substrate 1 (X = Ph) and a naphthalene dioxygenase enzyme (NDO). Compound 4 (X = Ph) was isolated as a minor metabolite in the presence of the more abundant bioproduct 2 (X = Ph).^{15,16} The use of site-directed mutants of NDO caused a major change in regioselectivity and yielded *cis*-dihydrodiol 4 (X = Ph) as the major bioproduct but in reduced yield.^{15,16} Recent studies of the biotransformation of toluene have provided tentative GC-MS evidence of the formation of both 2,3- and 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiol metabolites of toluene using an *ortho*-xylene dioxygenase present in a *Rhodococcus* strain.^{17,18} While the 4-catechol metabolite of toluene was isolated, no direct NMR or stereochemical data was reported for the elusive 3,4-*cis*dihydrodiol precursor **4e**.

Biotransformations of *ortho* substituted iodobenzene derivatives as substrates **1f–j** have been carried out in these laboratories, using *P. putida* UV4 cultures. These studies revealed an exclusive preference for TDO-catalysed *cis*-dihydroxylation of the unsubstituted C=C bond proximate to the iodine atom to yield the corresponding *cis*-dihydrodiols **2f_s–j_s**.¹⁹ Hydrogenolysis (H₂, Pd/C in MeOH) of *cis*-dihydrodiols **2f_s–j_s** gave the *unnatural* 3,4*cis*-dihydrodiol regioisomers **4a_s–e_s** (Scheme 2). While this earlier indirect approach to 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols **4a_s–e_s** was successful, the yields obtained after biotransformation of the more expensive



Scheme 2

ortho substituted iodobenzene substrates, and after removal of the iodine atom, were much lower than those obtained using monosubstituted benzenes. The development of an alternative method, based on monosubstituted benzene substrates, was therefore considered a worthwhile objective.

Using other dioxygenase types, enzyme-catalysed cisdihydroxylation at the 1,2-ipso bond of monosubstituted benzene substrates 1, to yield *cis*-dihydrodiols 5, has been reported (Scheme 1). Thus, when benzoic acid 1 (X = CO_2H) was used as a substrate for a benzoate dioxygenase enzyme,20,21 it yielded a stable *cis*-dihydrodiol 5 (X = CO_2H) while it was postulated that nitrobenzene 1 ($X = NO_2$) gave a transient *cis*dihydrodiol intermediate 5 (X = NO_2) using a nitrobenzene dioxygenase.^{22,23} Other types of 1,2-cis-dihydrodiols e.g. 5a-d, that could in principle be derived from dioxygenase-catalysed cis-dihydroxylation of monohalogenated benzene substrates, will also be too unstable to isolate using either enzyme-catalysed or chemical synthesis methodology. The previously unreported 1,2cis-dihydrodiol derivatives of monoalkylated benzene substrates (e.g. cis-dihydrodiol $5e_s$ and $5e_R$), were expected to be much more stable.

In view of the proven value of the *natural* arene *cis*-dihydrodiols $(2\mathbf{a}_{s}-\mathbf{e}_{s})$ in the synthesis of many natural products,⁹⁻¹³ and our continued interest in finding new dioxygenase enzymes capable of producing the *unnatural cis*-dihydrodiol regioisomers (*e.g.* $4\mathbf{a}_{s}-\mathbf{e}_{s}$, $5\mathbf{e}_{s}$) by direct biotransformation of the corresponding arene precursors, a generally applicable chemoenzymatic approach to their synthesis has been developed and is presented herein (Scheme 2).

Results and discussion

The 2,3-cis-dihydrodiols of fluorobenzene 2a, chlorobenzene 2b, bromobenzene 2c, iodobenzene 2d and toluene 2e were available from earlier biotransformations of the corresponding monosubstituted benzenes (1a-e) using P. putida UV4.5 Catalytic osmylation of *cis*-dihydrodiols $2a_s - d_s$ using the Donohoe conditions²⁴ (OsO₄, CH₂Cl₂, Me₃NO), resulted in the exclusive *cis*-dihydroxylation of the unsubstituted alkene bonds to yield mainly the syn-tetraols $6a_s - d_s$ (71–80% yield). The minor amount (*ca*: 15%) of the late eluting corresponding anti-tetraols formed was separated from the early eluting syn-tetraols $6a_s$ - d_s by charcoal-celite (1 : 1, w/w) column chromatography (H₂O \rightarrow 10% EtOH in H₂O). It was assumed that the existing cis-diol group played a stereodirecting role through intermolecular H-bonding with an oxo ligand on OsO4. Under similar conditions, cis-dihydroxylation of the toluene cis-dihydrodiol $2e_s$ resulted in the concomitant cis-dihydroxylation of two alkene bonds ($C_3=C_4$ and $C_5=C_6$) to yield a mixture of syn-tetraols $6e_s$ and $9e_s$. The mixture of syn-tetraols was again separated by charcoal-celite column chromatography to give the pure late eluting isomer $6e_s$ (50% yield) and early eluting isomer $9e_s$ (40% yield, Scheme 3).

Treatment of *syn*-tetraols $6a_s$ -d_s with 2-acetoxyisobutyryl bromide gave the anticipated *bis*-bromoacetates **7a**-d in relatively high yields (80–87%) due to S_N2 nucleophilic attack of bromide anion at the allylic positions of the dioxolane intermediates. When this procedure was applied to the *syn*-tetraol $6e_s$, the desired product **7e** was found to be contaminated with a minor *bis*bromoacetate isomer **12e** (20% by ¹H-NMR analysis). Since the





Scheme 3

bis-bromoacetates rapidly decompose on chromatography, only a small pure sample of the major bis-bromoacetate 7e could be isolated by PLC for characterization. The major portion of the mixture of bis-bromoacetates 7e and 12e (total yield 82%) was, therefore used without separation in the next stage of the synthesis. The isolation of a pure sample *cis*-diol $2e_s$, obtained from reduction of the mixture of syn-toluene-dioxides 8es and $13e_s$, is consistent with the intermediacy of the dibromoacetate 12e. This bis-bromoacetate intermediate 12e may have resulted from an initial nucleophilic $(S_N 2')$ attack of the bromide anion at the alkene bond of the transient intermediate shown in Scheme 4. While the mechanism is shown as a concerted process, involving a bis-dioxolanium intermediate, a stepwise process via a monodioxolanium intermediates is also possible. Similar treatment of tetraol $9e_s$ yielded *bis*-bromoacetate 10e (85% yield) as the sole product (Scheme 3).

Base-catalysed cyclisation of the *bis*-bromoacetates **7a**–e and **10e** (NaOMe, Et₂O) at ambient temperature, gave the corresponding *syn*-benzene dioxides **8a**_s–**e**_s and **11e**_s (70–82% yield,



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Scheme 3) with all being enantiopure (>98% ee) except $8a_s$ (60% ee). Under these conditions, the residual mixture of dibromodiacetates 7e and 12e was converted directly into a corresponding inseparable mixture of *syn*-benzene-dioxides ($8e_s$ and $13e_s$, 80:20).

In earlier studies25,26 of the reactivity of the anti-benzene dioxide analogues of syn-dioxides $8b_s-d_s$, under conditions normally associated with the carbonylation of aryl iodides [Pd(OAc)₂, CO, K₂CO₃, THF-H₂O], reduction to the corresponding *trans*dihydrodiols (>85% yield) was observed. Further study has now shown that this unusual benzene dioxide reduction reaction can also be applied to syn-dioxides $8a_s - e_s$ and $11e_s$ (and $11e_R$) to give the corresponding 3,4-cis-dihydrodiols $4a_s-e_s$ and 1,2-cisdihydrodiols $5e_s$ (and $5e_s$) in acceptable yields (64–77%). Similarly, the mixture of syn-benzene-dioxides ($8e_s$ and $13e_s$) gave a separable mixture of the corresponding 3,4- and 2,3-cis-dihydrodiols of toluene ($4e_s$ and $2e_s$). The isolated sample of *cis*-dihydrodiol $2e_s$ proved to be indistinguishable from the starting compound, thus providing confirmation of the stereochemical integrity of the steps shown in Scheme 3. It was assumed that the mechanism of the reaction of *syn*-benzene dioxides $8a_s-e_s$, $11e_s$ and $13e_s$ to give the corresponding *cis*-dihydrodiols $4a_s-e_s$, $5e_s$ and $2e_s$, involved reduction of the Pd(II) diacetate to Pd(0) with concomitant oxidation of CO to CO₂. This assumption was supported by the observation that both syn- and anti-benzene dioxides were reduced in similar or lower yields to the corresponding *cis*- and trans-dihydrodiols when Pd (PPh₃)₄ and K₂CO₃ were used with THF-H₂O as the solvent without CO being present.

The *syn*-dioxides $8a_s - e_s$, $11e_s$ and $13e_s$ all proved to be relatively stable under neutral conditions below 60 °C. However, upon

heating at higher temperatures (>70 °C), a retro-Diels–Alder cycloaddition (electrocyclic rearrangement) was expected to occur to form equilibrium mixtures with the corresponding achiral 1,4dioxocin valence tautomers. This expectation was based on the earlier work by Vogel *et al.* on *syn*-benzene dioxide **8** (X = H) and racemic monosubstituted *syn*-benzene dioxides **8** (X = Br, CO₂H, CHO, COCl). These dioxides were synthesisied by a different route and their thermal equilibration with the corresponding 1,4-dioxocins was also reported.²⁷⁻³²

The thermal valence tautomerisation of the syn-toluene dioxides $8d_s$ and $11e_s$ (ca. 77 °C in CCl₄) to the corresponding 1,4dioxocins 14d and 15 was followed by ¹H-NMR spectroscopy. The proportion of 1,4-dioxocin valence tautomer 15 (>98%) present at equilibrium was higher than that observed for compound 14d (88%), consistent with a link between substituent position and equilibrium ratio. Similarly, when the mixture of syn-toluene dioxides $8e_s$ and $13e_s$ was heated under these conditions, NMR analysis of the product mixture indicated that these dioxides were also isomerised to an inseparable mixture of the corresponding 1,4-dioxocins 14e (40%) and 16 (>98%). Thus, the 1,4-dioxocin tautomers 15 and 16 were formed exclusively (>98%) after electrocyclic rearrangement of corresponding syn-toluene dioxides $11e_s$ and $13e_s$. The *syn*-toluene dioxide $8e_s$ was found to have a lower proportion of the corresponding 1,4-dioxocin tautomer 14e (40%) present at equilibrium. A similar link between substitution patterns and benzene oxide-oxepin valence tautomeric ratios was found earlier and rationalised in terms of the maximum number of low energy valence-bond structures that can be drawn and this was supported by MINDO/3 calculations.33 The variation in arene dioxide-1,4-dioxocin valence tautomer ratios after thermal equilibration could also be explained on a similar basis.

The thermal equilibration of *syn*-toluene dioxides, *e.g.* $8e_s$, $11e_s$ and $13e_s$ with the corresponding 1,4-dioxocins, *e.g.* 14e, 15 and 16, was assumed to involve a novel concomitant racemisation at four chiral centres. In order to provide confirmation of this rare phenomenon, the thermal racemisation–valence tautomerisation process (*ca.* $85 \,^{\circ}$ C in toluene), for a typical *syn*-benzene dioxide (*e.g.* $8d_s$), was followed by polarimetry, ¹H-NMR, and chiral stationary phase HPLC analyses. Thus, *syn*-benzene dioxide $8d_s$ was heated at $85 \,^{\circ}$ C in toluene until equilibrium between $8d_s$ and 14d (12 : 88) was established (*ca.* $2 \,$ h) (Scheme 5). The sample of the *syn*-benzene dioxide $8d_s$ present, after complete equilibration had occurred, was isolated by PLC and was found to be racemic. When a pure sample of the 1,4-dioxocin 14d was heated under similar conditions, an identical equilibrium ratio for compounds $8d_s$ and 14d was observed.

In principle, the 1,4-dioxocins 14d, 14e, 15 and 16 could be considered aromatic compounds as each contains 10π electrons and may thus adopt a planar conformation. Earlier X-ray crystallographic studies of similar 1,4-dioxocins 14 (X = COCl and a γ -pyrone)²⁹ indicated that while in one case the ring was essentially planar, in the second example the ring was non-planar, having a twist-boat-chair conformation in the crystalline phase. The preferred conformation of the 1,4-dioxocin ring system in the solution phase remains to be investigated.

The availability of the 2,3-*cis*-dihydrodiol of toluene with an excess of the abnormal (1*R*)-enantiomer ($2e_R$ and $2e_S$, 80 : 20), from an earlier biotransformation of 4-iodotoluene followed by



hydrogenolysis,^{34,35} allowed the corresponding 1,2-*cis*-dihydrodiol **5e**_{*R*} and 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiol **4e**_{*R*} of toluene (*ca.* 60% ee) to be synthesised, using the methods shown in Scheme 3. It was also possible to increase the enantiopurity of this abnormal 2,3-*cis*-dihydrodiol enantiomer **2e**_{*R*} from 60% ee up to >95% by fractional crystallisation or by a *cis*-diol dehydrogenase-catalysed kinetic resolution process. When a small sample of *cis*-dihydrodiols **4e**_{*R*} (*ca.* 60% ee) was biotransformed, using naphthalene *cis*-diol dehydrogenase enzyme, present in the recombinant strain, *E. coli* narB by the reported method,³⁶ the recovered *cis*-dihydrodiol **4e**_{*R*} from the culture medium was found to be enantiopure (>98% ee).

Conclusion

A generally applicable synthetic route to a series of unnatural 3,4-*cis*-dihydrodiols $\mathbf{4}_s$, from the corresponding natural 2,3-*cis*-dihydrodiols $\mathbf{2}_s$, has been developed. This method has also been applied to obtain enantiomers, $\mathbf{5e}_s$ and $\mathbf{5e}_R$, of the unnatural toluene 1,2-*cis*-dihydrodiol from the 2,3-isomers, $\mathbf{2e}_s$ and $\mathbf{2e}_R$. The racemisation and isomerisation studies of the *syn*-benzene dioxide intermediates $\mathbf{8d}_s$, $\mathbf{8e}_s$, $\mathbf{11e}_s$ and $\mathbf{13e}_s$ to give 1,4-dioxocins $\mathbf{14d}$, $\mathbf{14e}$, $\mathbf{15}$ and $\mathbf{16}$ have also been carried out.

Experimental

¹H-NMR and ¹³C-NMR spectra were recorded on Bruker Avance DPX-300 and DPX-500 instruments and mass spectra were run at 70 eV, on a VG Autospec Mass Spectrometer, using a heated inlet system. Accurate molecular weights were determined, by the peak matching method, with perfluorokerosene as standard. Elemental microanalyses were carried out on a Perkin-Elmer 2400 CHN microanalyser. For optical rotation ($[a]_D$) measurements (*ca.* 20 °C, 10⁻¹ deg cm² g⁻¹), a Perkin-Elmer 214 polarimeter was used. Flash column chromatography and PLC were performed on Merck Kieselgel type 60 (250–400 mesh) and PF_{254/366} respectively. Merck Kieselgel type 60F₂₅₄ analytical plates were used for TLC. Samples of *cis*-dihydrodiols **2a**_{*s*}–**e**_{*s*} and the *cis*-dihydrodiol derivative from 4-iodotoluene were available from earlier studies.^{24,35}

Catalytic cis-dihydroxylation of cis-dihydrodiols 2as-ds

To a solution of the diols $2\mathbf{a}_s$ (*ca.* 60% ee), $2\mathbf{b}_s$ - \mathbf{d}_s (>98% ee, 8 mmol), in CH₂Cl₂ (160 cm³), was added trimethylamine-N-oxide dihydrate (11 mmol) and a catalytic amount of osmium tetroxide (ca. 0.002 g). The reaction mixture was left stirring at room temperature until the dihydroxylation was completed (3 days, TLC analysis). A saturated solution of sodium metabisulfite (5 cm^3) was added and the reaction mixture stirred (0.5 h) at room temperature. The solvents were removed in vacuo, and the residual crude product purified by charcoal-celite (1 : 1, w/w) column chromatography (H₂O \rightarrow 10% EtOH in H₂O). The pure tetraols $6a_s$ -d_s were obtained in the early eluting fractions. Catalytic *cis*-dihydroxylation (OsO₄) of *cis*-diol $2e_s$ (>98% ee) gave a mixture of diastereoisomeric tetraols 6e and 9e. This was also separated by charcoal-celite column, tetraol 9e eluted before tetraol 6e. An enantioenriched (ca. 60% ee) sample of cisdihydrodiol $2e_R$, available from earlier studies, was treated in a similar manner to *cis*-diol $2e_s$.^{34,35} Compound $6c_s$ had been reported earlier.37

(1S,2S,3S,4S)-5-Fluoro-5-cyclohexene-1,2,3,4-tetraol 6a_s

Colourless oil (1.05 g, 80%); $[a]_{\rm D}$ –3.0 (*c* 0.80, MeOH); *ca.* 60% ee, (found: M⁺ – H₂O, 146.0378. C₆H₇FO₃ requires 146.0379); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CD₃OD) 3.92–3.94 (2 H, m, 2-H and 3-H), 4.32–4.34 (2 H, m, 1-H and 4-H), 5.43 (1 H, dd, $J_{6,\rm F}$ 15.3, $J_{6,\rm I}$ 3.7, 6-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CD₃OD) 66.66, 66.75, 68.23, 69.91, 69.99, 106.20, 160.08; m/z (EI) 146 (M⁺ – H₂O, 91%), 128 (80), 1117 (82), 104 (100), 75 (82), 60 (29), 55 (31), 51 (18), 41 (48), 31 (18).

(1S,2S,3R,4R)-5-Methyl-5-cyclohexene-1,2,3,4-tetraol 6e_s

Colourless oil (0.64 g, 50%); $[a]_D - 1.0 (c 0.94, MeOH)$; (found: M⁺, 160.0729. C₇H₁₂O₄ requires 160.0736); δ_H (500 MHz, D₂O) 1.62 (3 H, s, Me), 4.12 (1 H, ddd, $J_{1,6}$ 3.2, $J_{1,2}$ 4.5, $J_{1,3}$ 1.8, 1-H), 4.22 (1 H, ddd, $J_{1,4}$ 0.6, $J_{3,2}$ 3.3, $J_{3,1}$ 1.5, 3-H), 4.32 (1 H, dd, $J_{4,6}$ 0.7, $J_{4,3}$ 1.7, 4-H), 4.47 (1 H, ddd, $J_{2,1}$ 4.4, $J_{2,3}$ 3.0, $J_{2,6}$ 1.6, 2-H), 5.80 (1 H, ddd, $J_{6,1}$ 3.2, $J_{6,2}$ 1.5, $J_{6,4}$ 0.7, 6-H); δ_C (125 MHz, D₂O) 19.56, 68.22, 70.19, 70.73, 71.62, 123.96, 137.17. m/z 160 (M⁺, 6%), 142 (33), 124 (89), 118 (90), 113 (87), 111 (84), 109 (42), 98 (89), 87 (60), 82 (87), 77 (91), 73 (99), 71 (85), 65 (87), 59 (92), 55 (90), 50 (96), 45 (93), 40 (91), 38 (100).

(1R, 2R, 3S, 4S)-5-Methyl-5-cyclohexene-1,2,3,4-tetraol $6e_R$

[*a*]_D +0.7 (*c* 0.44, MeOH); *ca.* 60% ee.

(1R,2R,3S,4S)-2-Methyl-5-cyclohexene-1,2,3,4-tetraol 9e_s

Colourless viscous oil (0.515 g, 40%); $[a]_D$ +6 (*c* 0.82, MeOH); (found: M⁺, 160.0726. C₇H₁₂O₄ requires 160.0736); δ_H (500 MHz, D₂O) 1.11 (3 H, s, Me), 3.53 (1 H, d, $J_{3,4}$ 4.5, 3-H), 3.82 (1 H, d, $J_{1.6}$ 3.0, 1-H), 4.09 (1 H, dd, $J_{4.3}$ 4.5, $J_{4.5}$ 2.5, 4-H), 5.77 (1 H, dd, $J_{5.6}$ 10.2, $J_{5.4}$ 2.5, 6-H); δ_C (125 MHz, D₂O) 21.5, 67.39, 71.98, 72.80, 73.96, 128.19, 130.46; *m*/*z* (EI) 160 (M⁺, 4%), 142 (32), 124 (82), 87 (87), 81 (79), 71 (80), 69 (85), 58 (87), 56 (82), 45 (93), 42 (88), 40 (81), 53 (44), 45 (25), 43 (83), 41 (71), 39 (66), 21 (50), 29 (100).

(1S, 2S, 3R, 4R)-2-Methyl-5-cyclohexene-1,2,3,4-tetraol 9e_R

 $[a]_{\rm D}$ -4.0 (c 0.67, MeOH); ca. 60% ee.

Syntheses of bis-bromoacetates 7a-e and 10e

To a stirred suspension of the tetraol (3 mmol), in dry acetonitrile (10 cm³) at 0 °C under a nitrogen atmosphere, 1-bromocarbonyl-1-methylethylacetate (2.5 mol equiv.) was added drop-wise. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 0 °C for 15 min and then at room temperature for another 2 h. The solvent was removed under reduced pressure and the residue thoroughly partitioned by shaking with a mixture of diethyl ether (50 cm³) and 3% aqueous NaHCO₃ (40 cm³). The ether extract was washed with water, dried (Na₂SO₄), and concentrated to afford a crude sample of bis-bromoacetate which was purified by PLC (15% EtOAc in hexane) or by recrystallisation.

(1*R*,2*R*,5*R*,6*S*)-6-(Acetyloxy)-2,5-dibromo-3-fluoro-3cyclohexenyl acetate 7a

Colourless oil (0.756 g, 80%); $R_{\rm f}$ 0.40; $[a]_{\rm D}$ +32 (*c* 0.78, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺ – OAc, 314.9883. C₈H₈Br₂FO₂ requires 314.9875); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 2.11 (3 H, s, OCOMe), 2.13 (3 H, s, OCOMe), 4.52 (1 H, br s, 5-H), 4.76 (1 H, dd, $J_{2,\rm F}$ 9.9, $J_{2,1}$ 6.3, 2-H), 5.62 (2 H, m, 1-H and 6-H), 5.68 (1 H, dd, $J_{4,\rm F}$ 11.9, $J_{4,\rm 5}$ 3.4, 4-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 20.64, 20.66, 39.40, 41.19, 71.08, 71.96, 108.00, 154.57, 169.28, 169.42; m/z (EI) 315 (M⁺ – OAc, 57%), 297 (11), 295 (12), 235 (18), 233 (19), 193 (43), 129 (52), 112 (49), 101 (81), 70 (33), 59 (72), 43 (100).

(1*S*,2*S*,5*R*,6*R*)-6-(Acetyloxy)-2,5-dibromo-3-methyl-3cyclohexenyl acetate 7e

A small portion of the diastereoisomeric mixture **7e** and **12e** (0.87 g, 82%), on separation by PLC (15% EtOAc in hexane), gave a pure sample of bis-bromoacetate **7e** as a light yellow oil, $R_{\rm f}$ 0.35; $[a]_{\rm D}$ -17 (*c* 0.86, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺ – Me, 354.8991. C₁₀H₁₁Br₂O₄ requires 354.9003); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 1.96 (3 H, s, Me), 2.10 (6 H, s, 2 × OCOMe), 4.41 (1 H, d, $J_{2,1}$ 4.0, 2-H), 4.75 (1 H, dd, $J_{5,6}$ 7.7, $J_{5,4}$ 3.1, 5-H), 5.55 (1 H, dd, $J_{1,2}$ 4.1, $J_{1,6}$ 2.5, 1-H), 5.67 (1 H, dd, $J_{6,5}$ 7.7, $J_{6,1}$ 2.5, 6-H), 5.77 (1 H, d, $J_{4,5}$ 3.1, 4-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 20.74, 20.75, 21.60, 44.62, 47.30, 71.50, 72.43, 127.15, 133.98, 169.58, 169.74; *m/z* (EI) 355 (M⁺ – Me, 70%), 311 (78), 253 (84), 231 (80), 229 (81) 185 (19), 187 (20), 108 (61), 57 (16), 43 (100).

(1*R*,2*R*,5*S*,6*S*)-6-(Acetyloxy)-2,5-dibromo-3-methyl-3cyclohexenyl acetate 7e'

 $[a]_{D}$ +11.0 (c 0.3, CHCl₃); ca. 60% ee.

(1*R*,2*R*,5*S*,6*S*)-6-(Acetyloxy)-2,5-dibromo-6-methyl-3cyclohexenyl acetate 10e

Colourless oil (0.85 g, 80%); $[a]_{\rm D} - 123$ (*c* 0.56, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺, 369.9254. C₁₁H₁₄Br₂O₄ requires 369.9238); $\delta_{\rm H}(500$ MHz, CDCl₃) 1.45 (3 H, s, Me), 1.97 (3 H, s, OCOMe), 2.16 (3 H, s, OCOMe), 4.57 (1 H, dd, $J_{2,1}$ 8.1, $J_{2,3}$ 3.2, 2-H), 5.79 (1 H, dd, $J_{3,4}$ 12.5, $J_{3,2}$ 3.2, 3-H), 5.86 (1 H, dd, $J_{4,3}$ 12.5, $J_{4,5}$ 5.2, 4-H), 6.09 (1 H, d, $J_{1,2}$ 8.1, 1-H), 6.26 (1 H, m, $J_{5,4}$ 5.2, 5-H); *m/z* (EI) 370 (M⁺, 100%),

311 (42), 252 (53), 231 (13), 229 (14), 191 (50), 189 (51), 167 (99), 125 (87), 108 (85), 83 (21), 43 (91).

(1*S*,2*S*,5*R*,6*R*)-6-(Acetyloxy)-2,5-dibromo-6-methyl-3cyclohexenyl acetate 10e'

 $[a]_{D}$ +76.0 (*c* 0.61, CHCl₃); *ca.* 60% ee.

Syntheses of syn-benzene dioxides $8a_s - e_s$, $11e_s$ and $11e_R$

To a solution of bis-bromoacetate (1.5 mmol) in dry ether (25 cm^3) at 0 °C, was added sodium methoxide (4 mol equiv.) and the mixture stirred at 0 °C for 15 min and then at room temperature (3 h). The reaction mixture was filtered through a pad of celite, the solid residue trapped on the pad washed with ether, and the combined filtrate concentrated at atmospheric pressure to yield the crude dioxide.

(1*S*,2*S*,4*S*,7*S*)-5-Fluoro-3,8-dioxa-tricyclo[5.1.0.0^{2,4}]oct-5-ene 8a_s

Colourless crystals (0.135 g, 70%); mp 40–45 °C; $[a]_{\rm D}$ –37 (*c* 0.59, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺, 128.0270. C₆H₃FO₂ requires 128.0273); $\delta_{\rm H}(500 \text{ MHz}, \text{CDCl}_3)$ 3.54 (1 H, dd, $J_{2,4}$ 4.0, $J_{2,1}$ 3.6, 2-H), 3.62 (1 H, dd, $J_{4,F}$ 8.2, $J_{4,2}$ 4.0, 4-H), 3.69 (1 H, dd, $J_{7,1}$ 3.2, $J_{7,6}$ 3.7, 7-H), 3.85 (1 H, dd, $J_{1,2}$ 3.6, $J_{1,7}$ 3.2, 1-H), 5.89 (1 H, dd, $J_{6,F}$ 13.2, $J_{6,7}$ 3.7, 6-H); *m/z* (EI) 128 (M⁺, 14%), 110 (17), 97 (38), 83 (44), 73 (23), 69 (37), 43 (100), 39 (25).

(1*S*,2*S*,4*S*,7*S*)-5-Methyl-3,8-dioxa-tricyclo[5.1.0.0^{2,4}]oct-5-ene 8e_{*S*}

Colourless oil, $[a]_{\rm D}$ +78 (*c* 0.76, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺, 124.0527, C₇H₈O₂ requires 124.0524); $\delta_{\rm H}(500$ MHz, CDCl₃) 2.05 (3 H, s, Me), 3.24 (1 H, d, $J_{4,2}$ 3.2, 4-H), 3.39 (1 H, dd, $J_{7,1}$ 3.2, $J_{7,6}$ 3.6, 7-H), 3.67 (1 H, dd, $J_{1,2} = J_{1,7}$ 3.3, 1-H), 3.69 (1 H, dd, $J_{2,4} = J_{2,1}$ 3.3, 2-H), 6.12 (1 H, d, $J_{6,7}$ 3.6, 6-H); $\delta_{\rm C}(125$ MHz, CDCl₃) 22.60, 47.00, 47.47, 47.89, 49.22, 123.43, 139.85; *m/z* (EI) 124 (M⁺, 2%), 106 (57), 85 (55), 81 (61), 51 (100), 43 (78), 37 (22).

(1R,2R,4R,7R)-5-Methyl-3,8-dioxa-tricyclo[5.1.0.0^{2,4}]oct-5-ene 8e_R

 $[a]_{\rm D}$ -50 (c 0.55, CHCl₃); ca. 60% ee.

(1R, 2S, 4S, 7R)-1-Methyl-3,8-dioxa-tricyclo[5.1.0.0^{2,4}]oct-5-ene 11e_s

Colourless oil (0.13 g, 70%); $[a]_D$ –67 (*c* 0.56, CHCl₃); (found: M⁺, 124.0593, C₇H₈O₂ requires 124.0524); δ_H (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 1.57 (3 H, s, Me), 2.93 (1 H, dd, $J_{4,2}$ 4.1, $J_{4,5}$ 2.6, 4-H), 3.13 (1 H, d, $J_{7,6}$ 2.6, 7-H), 3.60 (1 H, d, $J_{2,4}$ 4.1, 2-H), 6.06 (2 H, m, 6-H, 5-H); δ_C (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 20.43, 48.00, 53.27, 58.03, 60.17, 129.31, 130.63; *m*/*z* (EI) 124 (M⁺, 5%), 106 (72), 95 (41), 77 (36), 57 (28), 43 (100), 29 (20).

(1S,2R,4R,7S)-1-Methyl-3,8-dioxa-tricyclo[5.1.0.0^{2,4}]oct-5-ene 11e_R

[*a*]_D +44 (*c* 0.33, CHCl₃); *ca.* 60% ee.

A mixture of each of the dioxides $8a_s-e_s$, $11e_s$, $11e_R$ (0.6 mmol), THF (1 cm³), water (0.4 cm³) and K₂CO₃ (4 mol equiv.) was stirred in the presence of a catalytic amount of palladium(II) acetate (*ca.* 0.01 g) under an atmosphere of CO until the starting material had reacted completely (*ca.* 12 h). The catalyst was filtered off and saturated NaCl solution (6 cm³) was added to the filtrate. The reaction mixture was extracted with EtOAc (3 × 10 cm³), the extract dried (Na₂SO₄), and concentrated under reduced pressure. Purification of the crude product (from the reactions of dioxides $8a_s-d_s$, $11e_s$ and $11e_R$) by PLC (50% EtOAc in hexane), yielded the corresponding *cis*-dihydrodiols $4a_s-d_s$, $5e_s$ and $5e_R$. The product, from the reaction of a crude mixture of dioxides $8e_s$ and $13e_s$ on multiple elution PLC (30% EtOAc in hexane) yielded pure samples of *cis*-dihydrodiols $4e_s$ and $2e_s$.

(1S,2R)-4-Fluoro-3,5-cyclohexadiene-1,2-diol 4a_s

Colourless crystals (0.05 g, 64%); $R_{\rm f}$ 0.38 (50% EtOAc in hexane); mp 70–74 °C (from CH₂Cl₂–hexane); $[a]_{\rm D}$ –80 (*c* 0.50, MeOH); *ca.* 60% ee, (found: M⁺, 130.0428. C₆H₇FO₂ requires 130.0430); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 1.56 (1 H, br s, OH), 4.29 (1 H, m, 2-H), 4.44 (1 H, m, 1-H), 5.48 (1 H, m, 6-H), 5.88 (1 H, m, 5-H), 6.00 (1 H, m, 3-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 66.57, 68.85, 119.98, 120.26, 135.65, 135.73, 160.00; *m*/*z* (EI) 130 (M⁺, 65%), 112 (16), 101 (57), 95 (13), 84 (100), 73 (32), 64 (24), 57 (55), 53 (94), 51 (37), 43 (41), 39 (44).

(1S,2R)-4-Methyl-3,5-cyclohexadiene-1,2-diol 4e_s

Colourless crystals (0.04 g, 53%); mp 78–80 °C (from EtOAchexane); $[a]_{\rm D}$ –16 (*c* 0.36, MeOH); >98% ee, (found: M⁺, 126.0056. C₇H₁₀O₂ requires 126.0681); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 1.79 (3 H, s, Me), 4.13 (2 H, dd, $J_{2,3}$ 4.8, $J_{2,1}$ 4.8, 2-H), 4.25 (1 H, m, 1-H), 5.68 (1 H, d, $J_{3,2}$ 4.8, 3-H), 5.82 (1 H, ddd, $J_{5,6}$ 9.7, $J_{5,3} = J_{5,1}$ 1.6, 5-H), 5.90 (1 H, dd, $J_{6,5}$ 9.7, $J_{6,1}$ 3.2, 6-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 21.25, 67.32, 68.23, 123.13, 126.16, 130.44, 133.69; *m*/*z* (EI) 126 (M⁺, 55%), 111 (34), 108 (10), 93 (29), 80 (100), 77 (42), 66 (6), 57 (10), 55 (45), 43 (35).

(1R,2S)-4-Methyl-3,5-cyclohexadiene-1,2-diol 4e_R

 $[a]_{D}$ + 11 (*c* 0.30, MeOH); *ca.* 60% ee.

(1S,2R)-3-Methyl-3,5-cyclohexadiene-1,2-diol 2e_s

White crystalline solid (0.01 g, 13%); mp 56–58 °C (EtOAc–hexane); $[a]_D$ +26 (*c* 1.76, MeOH); >98% ee. The isolated product was identical to *cis*-dihydrodiol **2e**_s used as a synthetic precursor.

(1R,2S)-1-Methyl-3,5-cyclohexadiene-1,2-diol 5es

Colourless oil (0.048 g, 65%); $[a]_{\rm D}$ –19 (*c* 0.57, MeOH); >98% ee, $R_{\rm f}$ 0.35 (50% EtOAc in hexane); (found: M⁺, 126.0677. C₇H₁₀O₂ requires 126.0681); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 1.27 (3 H, s, Me), 4.46 (1 H, br s, 2-H), 5.71–5.80 (4 H, m, 3-H, 4-H, 5-H, 6-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (125 MHz, CDCl₃) 17.88, 74.35, 75.53, 122.02, 122.54, 130.63, 134.85; *m*/*z* (EI) 126 (M⁺, 13%), 108 (14), 107 (9), 97 (17), 81 (13), 77 (17), 65 (13), 55 (25), 43 (100), 39 (24). $[a]_{\rm D}$ +12 (*c* 0.77, MeOH); *ca.* 60% ee.

Synthesis of 1,4-dioxocins 14d and 15

syn-Benzene dioxides $\mathbf{8d}_s$ and $\mathbf{11e}_s$ (0.25 mmol) were each dissolved in dry CCl₄ (10 cm³). The solution was heated at 77 °C for 10 h and samples removed periodically for analysis. The mixture was then cooled and the solvent removed under reduced pressure to yield mixtures of 1,4-dioxocin **14d** and *syn*-dioxide $\mathbf{8d}_s$ (or **15** and $\mathbf{11e}_s$). Purification by chromatography on silica gel (10% Et₂O–hexane) gave the pure 1,4-dioxocins (**14d** and **15**) and the residual *syn*-dioxides ($\mathbf{8d}_s$ and $\mathbf{11e}_s$).

6-Iodo-1,4-dioxocin 14d

Colourless low mp solid (0.036 g, 61%); $R_{\rm f}$ 0.76 (25% Et₂O in hexane); (found: C 30.7; H 2.2. C₆H₅IO₂ requires C 30.54; H 2.1%); $\delta_{\rm H}$ (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 5.55 (1 H, d, $J_{7.8}$ 6.9, 7-H), 5.83 (1 H, d, $J_{2.3}$ 4.3, 2-H), 5.87 (1 H, d, $J_{3.2}$ 4.3, 3-H), 6.16 (1 H, d, $J_{8.7}$ 6.9, 8-H), 6.86 (1 H, s, 5-H); $\delta_{\rm C}$ (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 114.34, 127.80, 127.84, 141.35, 145.74.

2-Methyl-1,4-dioxocin 15

Off-white low mp solid (0.02 g, 65%); R_f 0.74 (25% Et₂O in hexane); (found: M⁺, 124.0531. C₇H₈O₂ requires 124.0524); δ_H (500 MHz, CDCl₃) 2.21 (3 H, s, CH₃), 4.93 (2 H, m, 6-H, 7-H), 6.12 (1 H, s, 3-H), 6.36 (1 H, d, $J_{8,7}$ 3.9, 8-H), 6.40 (1 H, d, $J_{5,6}$ 3.9, 5-H); δ_C (75 MHz, CDCl₃) 17.65, 106.54, 107.62, 112.74, 130.69, 145.38, 146.90.

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