Synthesis of Carborane-containing Nitroimidazole Compounds *via* Mild 1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition

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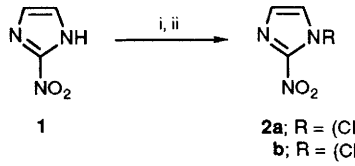
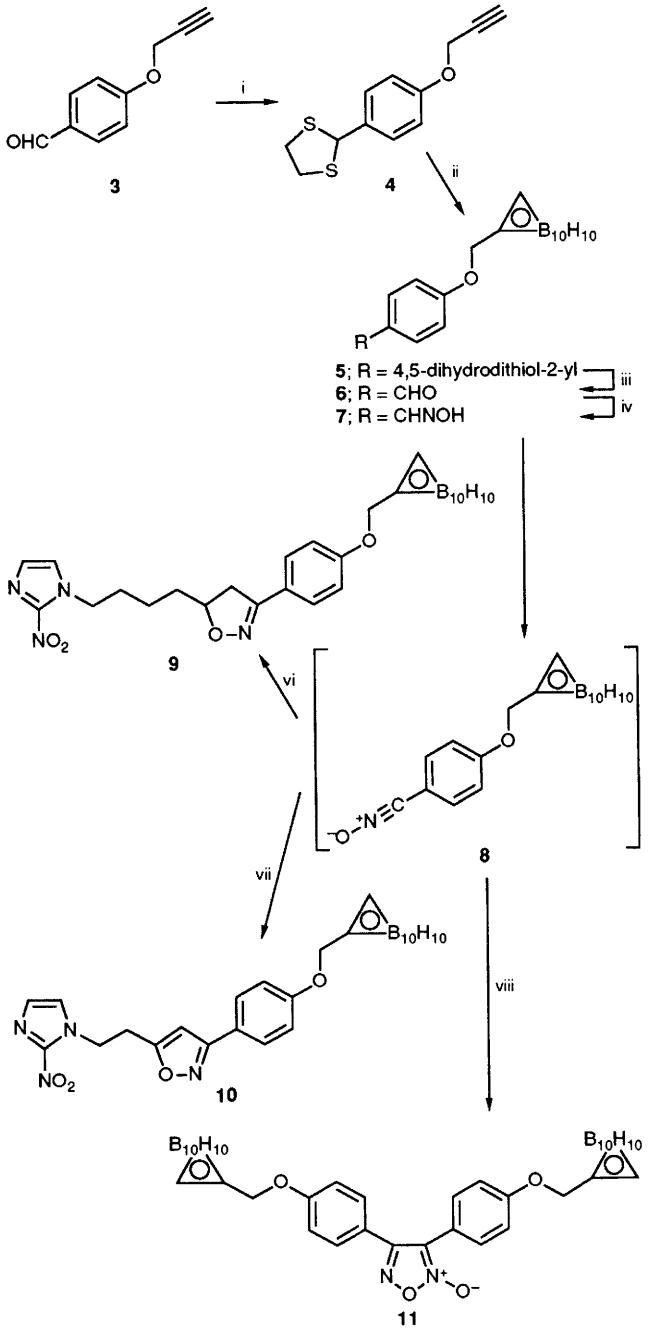
Nitroimidazole-linked carboranes are synthesised in good yield from ω-alkenyl- and ω-alkynyl-2-nitroimidazoles and a carborane nitrile oxide by 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition under mild conditions.

Boron neutron capture therapy (BNCT) is of increasing interest as a strategy for treatment of various cancers[1] and is based on the $^{10}B(n,\alpha)^{7}Li$ reaction of the ^{10}B isotope. Early studies of BNCT using non-targeted boron compounds gave mixed results.[2] Failures were attributed to inadequate concentrations of ^{10}B in the tumour tissue or lack of selectivity of disposition of ^{10}B, leading to damage to normal tissue. Recently, carboranes have been linked to nucleosides[3] and to porphyrins[4] in attempts to target boron to tumours. 2-Nitroimidazoles are selectively retained in poorly vascularised hypoxic tumour tissue by reductive metabolism to electrophiles.[5] As an extension of a programme of synthesis and evaluation of nitroimidazoles in the treatment of cancer,[6,7] we propose that a compound containing 10–12 boron atoms linked to 2-nitroimidazole would form a useful method of concentrating boron in solid tumours. Nitroimidazoles bearing boron are hitherto unreported.

Simple and complex boranes are widely used as reducing agents but 1-substituted-2-nitroimidazoles are themselves readily reduced (E^{1}_{7} = −389 mV);[7] thus assembly of a molecule containing both moieties must be achieved under mild conditions. Alkylation of 2-nitroimidazole **1** requires vigorous conditions and the *closo*-1,2-dicarbadodecarboranes are prepared[8] by reaction of alkynes and decarborane(14) ($B_{10}H_{14}$) in the presence of boiling Lewis bases for long reaction times. 1,3-Dipolar cycloadditions of nitrile oxides to



Scheme 1 *Reagents and conditions*: i, KOBu^t, DMF, 100 °C; ii, $BrCH_2CH_2CH_2CH_2CH{=}CH_2$ or $TsOCH_2CH_2C{\equiv}CH$, DMF, 130 °C



Scheme 2 *Reagents and conditions*: i, $HSCH_2CH_2SH$, $BF_3{\cdot}Et_2O$; ii, $B_{10}H_{14}$, MeCN, reflux 3 days; iii, $Hg(ClO_4)_2{\cdot}3H_2O$, THF, 5 min; iv, $NH_2OH{\cdot}HCl$, Na_2CO_3, EtOH; v, NaOCl, H_2O, CH_2Cl_2; vi, **2a**; vii, **2b**; viii, PhMe, reflux

alkenes and alkynes proceed[9] under mild conditions; hence this method was chosen to link appropriate nitroimidazoles and carboranes for the final assembly step.

The potassium salt of 2-nitroimidazole **1** was alkylated with 6-bromohex-1-ene and with but-3-ynyl tosylate[10] in hot DMF (dimethylformamide) to give the alkene **2a**[7] (78%) and the alkyne **2b**† (59%), respectively (Scheme 1). As predicted, treatment of **2b** with $B_{10}H_{14}$ gave only polar degradation products.

4-(3-Prop-1-ynyloxy)benzaldehyde **3**[11] was chosen as the bifunctional compound for elaboration to form a carborane and a nitrile oxide. Both aldehyde **3** and the 4,5-dihydro-1,3-dioxole protected form were unstable to $B_{10}H_{14}$. However, protection of the aldehyde as the 4,5-dihydro-1,3-dithiole **4**† was achieved in 80% yield (Scheme 2). This protecting group resisted prolonged treatment with $B_{10}H_{14}$ in refluxing acetonitrile, which furnished carborane **5**† (51%). The aldehyde was unmasked cleanly under very mild conditions using $Hg(ClO_4)_2$, giving carboranylmethoxybenzaldehyde **6**† (90%) in a much shorter sequence than that reported[4] for the synthesis of the *meta* isomer. Oxidation of the corresponding oxime **7**† to give nitrile oxide **8**‡ and 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition with **2a** and **2b** were effected§ as one-pot procedures, affording the required dihydroisoxazole **9**†¶ and the isoxazole **10**†‖ in which both nitroimidazole and carborane moieties are present. Yields were essentially quantitative based on dipolarophile and nitrile oxide consumed.

Formation of the intermediate nitrile oxide **8** was very rapid but prolonged reaction times at ambient temperature were required for acceptable conversion into heterocycles. Even after several days, no boron-containing compounds other than **8, 9** or **10** were evident and it was possible to isolate unreacted **8** from the reaction mixtures by chromatography. This nitrile oxide is remarkably stable, with little decomposition after several weeks at ambient temperature; in contrast, the $t_{\frac{1}{2}}$ of most aromatic nitrile oxides is reported[9] to be only a few hours. Conversion into the dimer, 1,2,5-oxadiazole 2-oxide **11**,†** was effected only on heating in boiling toluene.

The mild conditions of the 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition described here permit the joining of sensitive 2-nitroimidazole and boron cage moieties within one molecule. This strategy represents an opportunity for incorporating chemically sensitive pharmacophores and targeting groups into drug molecules while generating a heterocycle which is itself capable of further elaboration. Compounds **9** and **10** are highly

† New compounds were characterised by ^1H NMR and MS and, for target compounds, microanalysis or high resolution MS.

‡ *Spectroscopic data* **8**: IR ν_{max}/cm^{-1} 2600 (B–H) and 2320 (C≡N$^+$-O$^-$); NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ 1.2–3.1 (10 H, br m, B_{10}-H_{10}), 3.97 (1 H, s, carborane 2-H), 4.38 (2 H, s, carborane-CH_2), 6.82 (2 H, d, Ar 3,5-H_2) and 7.40 (2 H, d, Ar 2,6-H_2).

§ Typical experiment: oxime **7** (1 mmol) and alkyne **2b** (1 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (20 ml) were treated with aqueous NaOCl for 18 h. Chromatography (silica gel; CH_2Cl_2) of the evaporation residue gave isoxazole **10**.

¶ **9**: NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ 1.3–3.3 (10 H, br m, B_{10}-H_{10}), 1.5–2.0 (6 H, m, imidazole-$CH_2CH_2CH_2CH_2$), 2.93 (1 H, dd) and 3.40 (1 H, dd) isoxazole 4-H_2, 4.09 (1 H, br, carborane 2-H), 4.45 (4 H, m, imidazole-CH_2 + carborane-CH_2), 4.73 (1 H, ddt, isoxazole 5-H), 6.87 (2 H, d, Ar 3,5-H_2) 7.11 (1 H, s) and 7.15 (1 H, s) imidazole 4,5-H_2, and 7.61 (2 H, d, Ar 2,6-H_2).

‖ **10**: NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ 1.3–3.3 (10 H, br m, B_{10}-H_{10}), 3.42 (2 H, t, isoxazole-CH_2), 4.09 (1 H, br, carborane 2-H), 4.46 (2 H, s, carborane-CH_2), 4.82 (2 H, t, imidazole-CH_2), 6.26 (1 H, s, isoxazole 4-H), 6.92 (2 H, d, Ar 3,5-H_2), 6.96 (1 H, s) and 7.09 (1 H, s) imidazole 4,5-H_2, and 7.70 (2 H, d, Ar 2,6-H_2).

** **11**: NMR ($CDCl_3$) δ 1.3–3.3 (20 H, br, m, 2 × B_{10}-H_{10}), 4.07 (2 H, br, 2 × carborane 2-H), 4.46 (2 H, s, carborane-CH_2), 4.47 (2 H, s, carborane-CH_2), 6.92 (4 H, d, Ar 3,5-H_2 + Ar′ 3,5-H_2), 7.47 (2 H, d, Ar 2,6-H_2), and 7.49 (2 H, d, Ar′ 2,6-H_2).

lipophilic; the development of more water-soluble analogues for biological evaluation will be reported elsewhere.

We thank the Cancer Research Campaign for generous financial support and the SERC and Dr J. A. Ballantine (University College of Swansea) for provision of the accurate FAB mass spectrum of compound **9**.

Received, 16th April 1992; Com. 2/01991D

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