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COMMUNICATION

Synthesis of 2-heteroaryl-3-hydroxypyridines by ring expansion reactions of 2-acylfurans with ammonia

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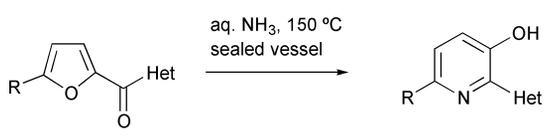
Received (in Cambridge, UK) 14th June 2001, Accepted 9th July 2001
First published as an Advance Article on the web 19th July 2001

Published on 19 July 2001 on http://pubs.rsc.org | doi:10.1039/B105228B
Downloaded by Duke University on 07 September 2012

A straightforward and versatile synthesis of 2-heteroaryl-3-hydroxypyridine derivatives is described by the one-step reaction of 2-acylfurans with ammonia at 150 °C.

Heteroaryl-substituted pyridine derivatives, including bipyridyls, are a very important family of compounds in diverse areas of chemistry such as metal-coordination complexes,[1] supramolecular assemblies,[2] pharmaceutical agents,[3] natural products[4] and molecular electronic device materials.[5] The vast majority of syntheses of heteroaryl- (or aryl-) substituted pyridines involve metal-catalysed cross-coupling reactions of the Stille or Suzuki type.[6] A few non-coupling procedures have been developed, but they are generally applicable only to a limited range of ring systems and substituents. Examples are: (i) cyclisation of a substituent which is attached to the pyridine ring (*e.g.* thioamide → thiazole);[1a] (ii) reaction of a lithioheterocycle with a pyridinium cation;[7] (iii) oxidation of a 2-heteroaryl-5-(phenylseleno)-3,4,5,6-tetrahydropyridine derivative.[8]

In the context of non-coupling routes to biaryls we were attracted to the work of Leditschke who reported in 1952 that 2-benzoylfuran (**1**, Het = Ph; R = H) reacted with ammonia to give 2-phenyl-3-hydroxypyridine. The proposed mechanism involves initial attack of ammonia at C-5 of the furan, leading to a ring opening–ring closure sequence, and the furan oxygen becomes the hydroxy group in the product.[9] Gruber extended this route to substituted phenyl substituents.[10] However, this reaction is essentially unexplored as a route to bi(heteroaryl) systems, although it has been established that the reaction will proceed with Het = dibenzofuran[11] and 2- and 4-pyridyl substituents.[12] We now report that this methodology is considerably more versatile than has been realised hitherto, and it provides a general route to a range of 2-heteroaryl-3-hydroxypyridine derivatives **2a**–**l** (Scheme 1 and Table 1).



1 **2**

Scheme 1

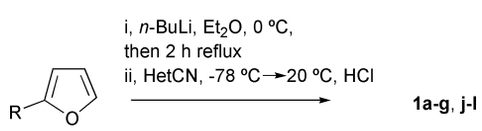
The precursor acylfuran derivatives **1a**–**l** were readily obtained as shown in Schemes 2–4. Lithiation of furan or 2-methylfuran **3**, followed by reaction with the appropriate cyano-substituted heterocycle, afforded compounds **1a**–**g**,**j**–**l** in 42–76% yields (Scheme 2). Compound **1h** was obtained (30% yield) by selective lithiation of 2,5-dibromopyridine **4** at C-5[13] and reaction with 2-cyanofuran (Scheme 3) and compound **1i** was prepared (42% yield) by the literature route from di-2-furylmethanol **5** (Scheme 4).[14]

Reaction of **1a**–**l** with aqueous ammonia at 150 °C in a sealed tube afforded products **2a**–**l** in the yields shown after purification in Table 1. Although these yields are only low or moderate, the reaction has many attractive and viable features from a synthetic viewpoint: (i) the starting furan derivatives **1a**–**l** are readily accessible from commercial reagents; (ii) it is usually straightforward to obtain analytically pure products **2** by a single recrystallisation of the crude product mixture (see Experimental below); (iii) the reaction proceeds with both electron-deficient (*e.g.* pyridyl, quinolyl, pyrazinyl) and electron-rich (*e.g.* furyl, indolyl) Het substituents; (iv) the products **2** carry a 3-hydroxy substituent which would not be tolerated by

Table 1 Compounds **2a**–**l** obtained by the route shown in Scheme 1

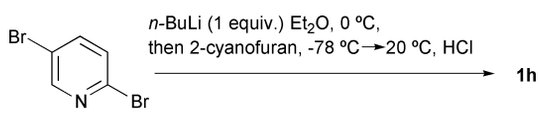
	Het	R	Yield (%)[a]	Mp/°C
a	2-Pyridyl	H	18	30–32
b	2-Pyridyl	Me	25	60–62
c	3-Pyridyl	H	37	171–173
d	3-Pyridyl	Me	27	195–196
e	4-Pyridyl	H	35	234–236
f	4-Pyridyl	Me	31	257–260
g	2-Me-5-pyridyl	H	15 (27)[b]	181–183
h	2-Br-5-pyridyl	H	26	167–169
i	2-Furyl	H	17	210–212
j	3-Quinolyl	H	26	181–184
k	5-Indolyl	H	12	141–143
l	Pyrazin-2-yl	H	20	87–89

[a] Yields refer to analytically pure product fully characterised by spectroscopic data after recrystallisation or column chromatography. [b] Yield obtained from reaction at 110 °C for 12 h.



3 R = H or Me

Scheme 2



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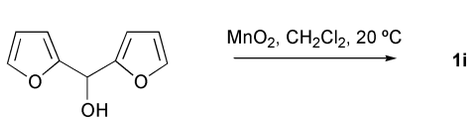
Scheme 3



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Scheme 4

DOI: 10.1039/b105228b

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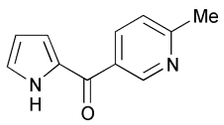
standard metal-catalysed cross-coupling routes, or other non-coupling routes without use of a protecting group.

We have found that the most widely applicable reaction conditions are 150 °C for 5 h. Although the yield of the pyridine products **2** can be raised by using a lower reaction temperature, this benefit is offset by the formation of more by-products which complicated the work-up procedure. For example, a detailed study of the conditions for **1g** established that reaction at 110 °C for 12 h gave **2g** in 27% yield along with the pyrrolyl pyridyl ketone derivative **6** (16% yield) which were separated chromatographically.



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It is also significant that the presence of the 5-methyl substituent R in **1b**, **d** and **f** does not hinder the ring-expansion reaction. This augers well for the use of more highly functionalised furans as precursors to new 3-hydroxypyridine derivatives[15] with otherwise inaccessible substitution patterns.

Experimental

A mixture of compound **1** (2.5 mmol) and aqueous ammonia solution (0.880, 2 cm^3) was heated in a sealed thick-walled glass Carius tube at 150 °C for 5 h. The tube was cooled, water and methanol were added and the crude product mixture was evaporated *in vacuo* to yield a brown gum. Trituration with acetone or ether gave a brown solid which was recrystallised to afford product **2**, or chromatographed on an alumina column with ethyl acetate as eluent. Spectroscopic and analytical data are entirely consistent with their structures.

Acknowledgements

We thank Seal Sands Chemicals Ltd. for funding this work.

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Published on 19 July 2001 on http://pubs.rsc.org | doi:10.1039/B105228B
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