4H-Thieno[3,4-c]pyrrole: Synthesis and Characterization of the Parent Ring System†

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4H-Thieno[3,4-c]pyrrole (4) was synthesised from the azide (8) by intramolecular 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition followed by acid-catalysed 1,3-dipolar cycloreversion of the dihydrotriazole intermediate (9); the crystal structure of one of the products formed on trapping (4) with N-phenylmaleimide has been determined.

2αβδ2-5H-Thieno[3,4-c]pyrroles, e.g. (1) and (2), containing a tetravalent sulphur atom have long been a subject of synthetic and theoretical interest. Although highly phenylated derivatives such as (1) and (2) have been prepared and well characterised, the nature of the parent system (3), represented in resonance terms as the pyrrole form (A) containing a tetravalent sulphur atom or as the azomethine ylide form (B) having a divalent sulphur atom, remains a matter of some controversy. Herein we report the first synthesis of 4H-thieno[3,4-c]pyrrole (4), and direct evidence of the tautomeric equilibrium between (4) and 2αβδ2-5H-thieno[3,4-c]pyrrole (3).

Knoevenagel condensation of the aldehyde (5)† with diethyl malonate gave the alkylidene malonate (6) (80%). Compound (6) was brominated with N-bromosuccinimide and dibenzoyl peroxide to give the bromide (7) (78%). Reaction of (7) with sodium azide in ethanol at room temperature afforded the azide (8) (98%). Intramolecular 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of

equiv.) in dry ether gave the salt (3). Treatment of (8) occurred on standing at room temperature for four days to give the dihydrotriazole (9) (80%, starting material was recovered). Treatment of (9) with toluene-p-sulphonic acid (1 equiv) in dry ether gave the salt (10) (96%) via a 1,3-dipolar cycloisomerisation. The salt (10) was then treated with saturated aqueous sodium carbonate; extraction with dichloromethane gave the parent compound (4) (93%) as a dark oil [1H n.m.r. (400 MHz, CDCl3) δ 4.54 (dd, J 2.7 and 1.4 Hz, 2H), 7.05 (br. s, 1H), 7.28 (d, J 2.2 Hz, 1H), and 8.24 (t, J 2.7 Hz, 1H); 13C n.m.r. (100.6 MHz, CDCl3) δ 58.59 (t), 113.53 (d), 114.44 (d), 149.29 (s), 151.71 (s), and 157.89 (d); m/z 123 (M+, 100%); νmax (CHCl3) 3010 and 1680 cm\(^{-1}\); m/z 123 (M+, 100%); νmax (CHCl3) 254 (ε 7.4 × 10\(^3\)). Compound (4) decomposed into a dark polymeric material when kept at room temperature. Treatment of the salt (10) in dichloromethane with excess of triethylamine in the presence of N-phenylmaleimide gave the endo-adduct (12) (12%) and the exo-adduct (13) (38%). Alternatively, treatment of the azide (8) with triphenylphosphine followed by water also afforded (4). In this case compound (4) was difficult to isolate, but once again could be trapped by reaction with N-phenylmaleimide to give (12) (25%) and (13) (17%). The facile cycloaddition with N-phenylmaleimide indicated a tautomeric equilibrium between (4) and (3), because (4) itself would not be expected to undergo cycloaddition with N-phenylmaleimide. The cycloaddition must have occurred via the tautomer (3). The site of cycloaddition, either the pyrrole or the thiophene ring, was then determined by use of the deuterium labelled (4d), which was prepared from (5d) by the sequence used to synthesise (4). Reaction of (4d) with N-phenylmaleimide gave the cycloadducts (12d) and (13d), neither of which gave pyrrole aromatic 1H n.m.r. signals. The structure of the more stable exo-adduct (13) was confirmed by a single crystal X-ray analysis, which clearly revealed that the cycloaddition had occurred at the pyrrole ring (Figure 1).

In conclusion, although structure (3) has received much theoretical investigation, our experiments have shown that (3) is only a highly reactive tautomer of the parent compound (4). The direct spectroscopic observation of the parent system (3) would be rather difficult under normal conditions. However, N-substitution on the pyrrole ring of (3) might force the formation of (3) in the pyrrole form (A) containing a

**Figure 1.** Molecular drawing of (13) generated by SHELXTL PLUS. Selected bond lengths (Å) and angles (°): C(3)–C(4) 1.541; C(3)–C(10) 1.556; C(4)–C(5) 1.540; N(2)–C(5) 1.492; C(2)–C(4)–C(3) 104.5; C(3)–C(4)–C(5) 103.0; C(1)–C(3)–C(10) 111.3; C(5)–N(2)–C(10) 96.2.
tetravalent sulphur atom. The synthesis of N-substituted compounds (3) is being investigated.

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