The Biosynthesis of Asperlactone: Incorporation Studies with [2-^{13}C,2-$^{2}H_3$]Acetate

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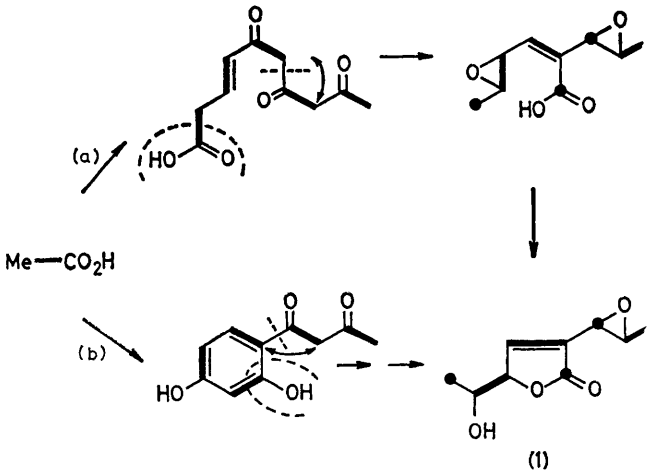
Summary The C-7 methyl group of asperlactone (**1**) retains up to two hydrogens from [2-^{13}C,2-$^{2}H_3$]acetate; the involvement of intermediates in which this carbon forms part of an aromatic ring is thus discounted.

RECENTLY, we showed that asperlactone (**1**) incorporates [1,2-$^{13}C_2$]acetate with the retention of three intact acetate units as shown in the Scheme.[1] Additionally, the detection of a two-bond ^{13}C–^{13}C coupling between C-2 and C-8 revealed that these two carbons are derived from a single

acetate unit.[2] AFavorskii-type mechanism can be proposed for this rearrangement which may take place either on a linear polyketide (path a) or on an aromatic intermediate (*e.g.* path b) as shown in the Scheme. We now describe experiments with [2-^{13}C,2-$^{2}H_3$]acetate[3] which help us to distinguish between these biosynthetic possibilities.



SCHEME

10 day old cultures of *Aspergillus melleus* IMI 49108 were refloated on to fresh sucrose-based medium (2 × 200 ml) and supplemented with [2-$^{2}H_3$,2-^{13}C]acetate (93 atom% ^{13}C, 99 atom% ^{2}H; 100 mg per flask per day over 5 days); on day 17, asperlactone (380 mg) was isolated. A parallel incorporation study with [1-^{14}C]acetate gave a 0·23% incorporation, corresponding to an estimated dilution factor per labelled site of 33.

In the 100 MHz proton noise decoupled ^{13}C n.m.r. spectrum of (**1**) in $CDCl_3$,† the signal for C-3 is enriched four-fold over natural abundance. The signals for C-5, C-7, C-8, and C-10, although enriched, are less intense than expected, consistent with the presence of some ^{2}H at these positions.

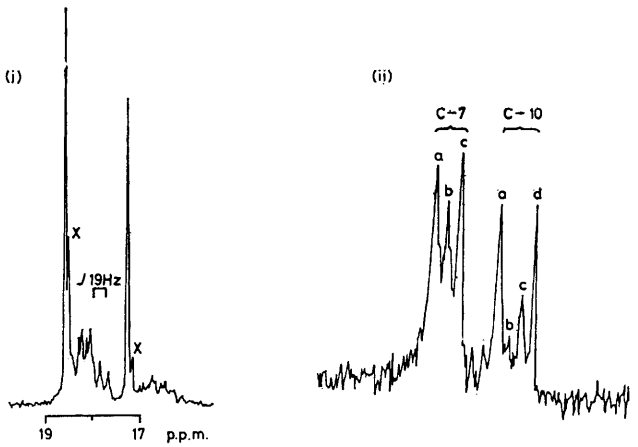


FIGURE. ^{13}C N.m.r. spectra of asperlactone (**1**): (i) 100 MHz ^{13}C {^{1}H}, (ii) 100 MHz ^{13}C {^{2}H, ^{1}H}; (a) $^{13}CH_3$, (b) $^{13}CH_2D$, (c) $^{13}CHD_2$, (d) $^{13}CD_3$.

The methyl region of the spectrum [Figure (i); Table] is complex; the strong singlets at δ 18·50 and 17·20 p.p.m. are clearly the normal $^{13}CH_3$ signals for C-7 and C-10 respectively. A triplet (*J* 19 Hz) centred at δ 18·22 p.p.m., 0·28 p.p.m. upfield of the main signal, and a quintet (*J* 19 Hz) centred at 17·96 p.p.m., 0·54 p.p.m. upfield, can be assigned to molecules labelled as $^{13}CH_2D$ and $^{13}CHD_2$ at C-7 respectively. A signal at δ 16·48 p.p.m. may be the centre resonance of a $^{13}CD_3$ septet for C-10 since it is 0·72 p.p.m. upfield of the normal signal for this carbon. Parts of the multiplets corresponding to $^{13}CHD_2$ and $^{13}CH_2D$ for C-10 are also visible.

These assignments were unambiguously confirmed by rerunning the spectrum‡ with simultaneous ^{1}H and ^{2}H decoupling [Figure (ii); Table]. Five singlets are clearly visible, assigned as follows: δ 18·59 ($^{13}CH_3$, C-7), 18·27 ($^{13}CH_2D$, C-7), 18·08 ($^{13}CHD_2$, C-7), 17·23 ($^{13}CH_3$, C-10), and 16·48 p.p.m. ($^{13}CD_3$, C-10). Weak signals between these last two are consistent with the presence of small amounts

TABLE. ^{13}C N.m.r. data for asperlactone (**1**) in $CDCl_3$.[a]

Carbon	Isotopic species	δ	Isotope shift (p.p.m.)	$J(^{13}C-^{1}H)$/Hz	$J(^{13}C-^{2}H)$/Hz
2	—	171·6(s)	—	—	—
3[b]	—	132·5(d)	—	—	—
4	—	147·8(s)	—	175	—
5	$^{13}C-^{1}H$	85·25(d)	—	151	—
	$^{13}C-^{2}H$	84·88	0·37	—	23
6	—	67·35(d)	—	143	—
7	$^{13}C-^{1}H_3$	18·50(q)	—	128	—
	$^{13}C-^{1}H_2{}^{2}H$	18·22	0·28	128	19
	$^{13}C-^{1}H^{2}H_2$	17·96	0·54	128	19
8[b]	—	52·00(d)	—	182	—
9	—	57·25(d)	—	176	—
10	$^{13}C-^{1}H_3$	17·20(q)	—	127	—
	$^{13}C-^{1}H_2{}^{2}H$	16·88	0·32	127	19
	$^{13}C-^{1}H^{2}H_2$	16·65	0·55	127	19
	$^{13}C-^{2}H_3$	16·48	0·72	—	19

[a] Recorded at 100 MHz on a Bruker WH-400 spectrometer. δ Values are in p.p.m. downfield of Me_4Si. [b] $J(^{13}C-^{13}C)$ 64 Hz.

† The free induction decay was recorded on a Bruker WH-400 spectrometer for a 0·87 M solution in $CDCl_3$ over an acquisition time of 0·8 s using a pulse angle of 40° to optimise the signal intensity of deuteriated carbons. The additional resonance in the Figure (i) arises from an isomer of (**1**) as discussed in ref. 1.

‡ Recorded for a 0·15 M solution in $CDCl_3$ containing 10% of C_6F_6. The slight differences in chemical shift values are due to the change in sample concentration and composition.

of $^{13}CH_2D$ and $^{13}CHD_2$ at C-10. There is no trace of a signal corresponding to $^{13}CD_3$ at C-7.

The proton-decoupled spectrum also reveals clearly a ^{13}C–^{2}H triplet for C-5 centred at δ 84·88 p.p.m., 0·37 p.p.m. upfield of the ^{13}C–^{1}H signal; with simultaneous decoupling, only two signals, singlets at δ 85·25 and 84·90 p.p.m., are visible. In contrast with C-5, C-8 shows no direct evidence for ^{2}H retention apart from slightly reduced signal intensity. Both C-8 and C-3 show flanking satellites [J(^{13}C–^{13}C) 64 Hz] resulting from the presence of ^{13}C at the adjacent carbon.

The retention of two acetate-derived hydrogens rules out the intervention of aromatic intermediates in which C-7 forms part of an aromatic ring. Taken with the results of the [1,2-$^{13}C_2$]acetate study, this leaves path (a), involving no aromatic intermediate, as the most plausible pathway for asperlactone biosynthesis.

We thank Brian Crysell for the 100 MHz n.m.r. spectra. M. J. G. acknowledges financial help from New Hall, Cambridge, and the Royal Society.

(*Received, 9th March* 1981; *Com.* 257.)

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[2] For related work on aspyrone, a co-metabolite of asperlactone, see T. J. Simpson and J. S. E. Holker, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 1975, 4693; M. Tanabe, M. Uramoto, T. Hamasaki, and L. Carey, *Heterocycles*, 1976, 355.
[3] M. J. Garson and J. Staunton, *Chem. Soc. Rev.*, 1979, 539.