The Total Synthesis of the Clerodane Diterpene Insect Antifeedant Ajugarin I

Steven V. Ley,* Nigel S. Simpkins, and Alan J. Whittle
Department of Chemistry, Imperial College, London SW7 2AY, U.K.

The first total synthesis of the polyoxygenated diterpene insect antifeedant ajugarin I (**1**) has been achieved by a route which involves a new method for the construction of 3-substituted-Δ^2-butenolides.

As a result of an observation that *Ajuga remota* (*Labiatae*) plants were not eaten by various insect species, subsequent isolation studies afforded three new polyoxygenated clerodane diterpene antifeedants,[1] the major component being assigned the structure ajugarin I (**1**). These antifeedant compounds immediately attracted the attention of synthetic chemists and resulted in the extensive model studies[2] and one total synthesis[3] of a related less functionalised insecticide, ajugarin IV (**2**).

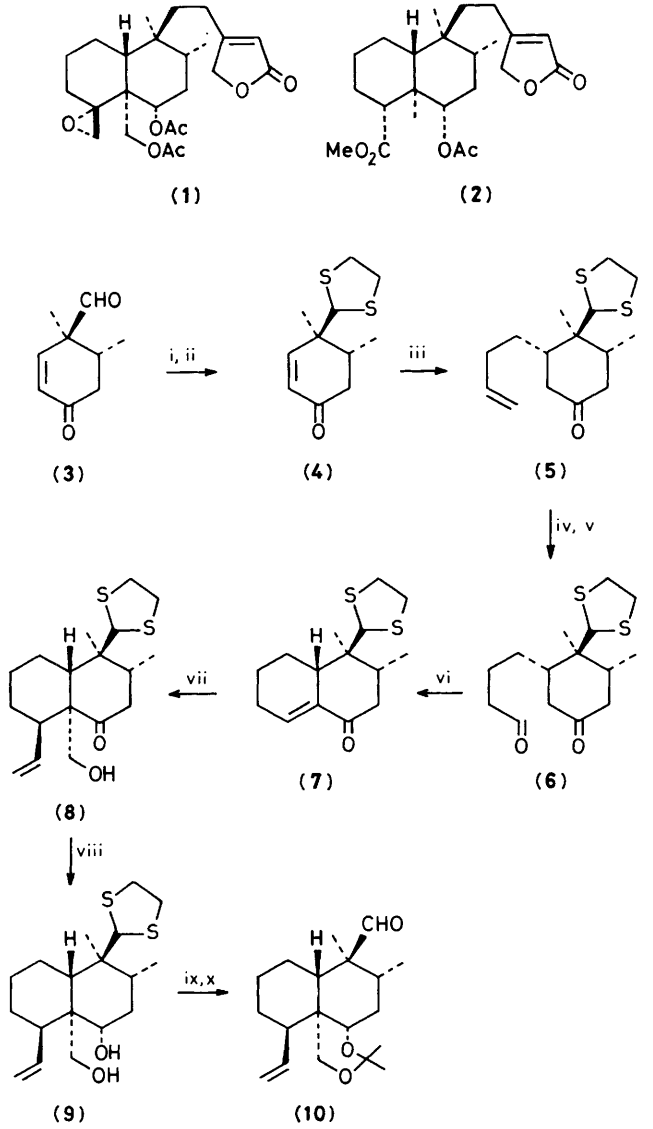
Here we report the first total synthesis of ajugarin I (**1**) using a strategy previously developed in these laboratories to construct appropriately functionalised *trans*-decalin ring systems.[2d]

The Diels–Alder reaction, at 120 °C over 24 h, of 1-methoxy-3-trimethylsilyloxybutadiene,[4] (Danishefsky's diene) with *E*-2-methylbut-2-enal afforded an adduct which upon treatment with aqueous hydrochloric acid in tetrahydrofuran (THF) gave the enone (**3**)† in 50% overall yield.‡ Conversion of (**3**) into the monodithiolane (**4**) was achieved in 55% yield by a sequence of reactions which involved initial diprotection

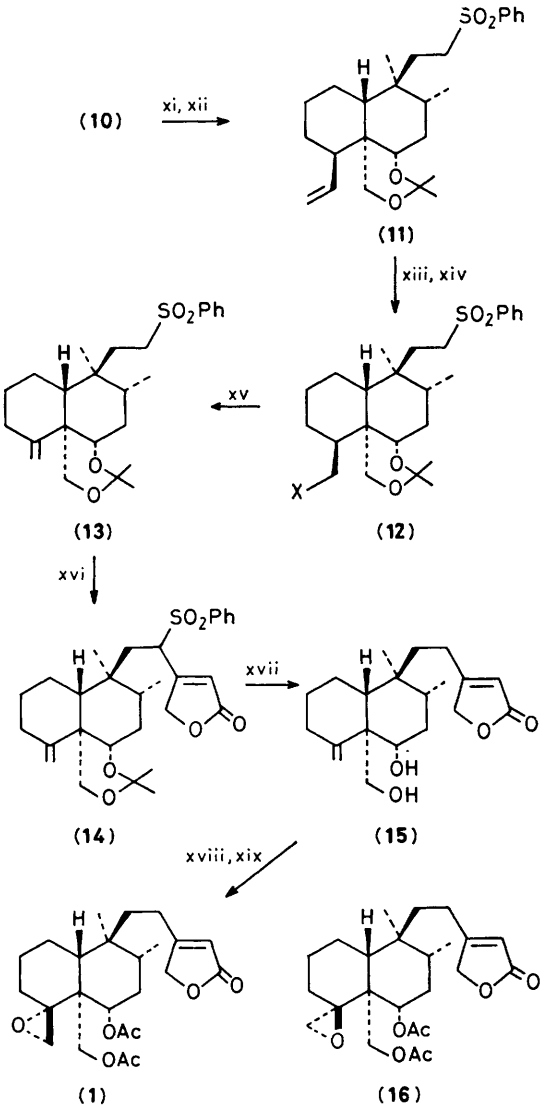
† All new compounds were fully characterised by spectroscopic, elemental microanalysis, and/or accurate mass methods.

‡ The mass balance in this reaction was partly made up by the other major product of cycloaddition of the diene to the aldehyde carbonyl group; for other examples of this process see S. Danishefsky, N. Kato, D. Askin, and J. F. Kerwin, Jr., *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1982, **104**, 360.

followed by specific removal of the more labile enone dithiolane group. The introduced dithiolane moiety in (**4**) acted as an excellent stereocontrol unit during the copper mediated addition of but-3-enylmagnesium bromide to afford (**5**) as the only detectable product in 93% yield.§ Compound (**5**) was treated with an excess of borane methyl sulphide to yield an intermediate diol (95%), which, without purification was converted by oxidation [using pyridine(py)·SO_3, Me_2SO[5]] into the keto-aldehyde (**6**) in 72% yield. Aldol condensation of (**6**) in the presence of camphor sulphonic acid gave the enone (**7**) in a useful 80% yield. Introduction of the requisite *trans*-hydroxymethyl substituent was guaranteed in the next step by vinyl cuprate addition to (**7**) from the least hindered side, followed by quenching of the resulting regiospecific enolate with formaldehyde at −40 °C to give (**8**) (52%). Stereospecific conversion of (**8**) into the diol (**9**) required prior formation of the diphenylbutylsilyl ether, to remove the reduction directing properties of the hydroxy group, followed by treatment with lithium aluminium hydride to give (**9**) in 69% yield upon work-up. Alternatively, (**9**) could be obtained directly from (**7**) in 44% overall yield without full purification of intermediates. Protection of (**9**) as the acetonide was trivial (95%); however the regeneration of the aldehyde group from the



Scheme 1. *Reagents:* i, $(CH_2SH)_2$, benzene, toluene-*p*-sulphonic acid, 12 h; ii, $CdCO_3$, $Hg(OAc)_2$, benzene–ether–H_2O (5:4:1), 24 h; iii, $(CH_2{=}CHCH_2CH_2)_2CuMgBr$ (2.2 equiv.), Et_2O, −40 °C, 1 h; iv, borane methyl sulphide, THF at room temp.; then H_2O_2–NaOH; v, py·SO_3 (6 equiv.), Me_2SO, CH_2Cl_2 at room temp.; vi, camphorsulphonic acid, benzene, reflux, 1 h; vii, $(CH_2{=}CH)_2$-CuLi (2.2 equiv.), THF, −40 °C, then CH_2O in THF at −40 °C; viii, Ph_2Bu^tSiCl, imidazole, dimethylformamide, then $LiAlH_4$, Et_2O, room temp.; ix, acetone, anhydrous $CuSO_4$, 12 h; x, $Tl(OCOCF_3)_3$ (1.8 equiv.), THF, room temp., and Na_2HPO_4 buffer (10 equiv.), 30 min.



Scheme 2. *Reagents:* xi, $(Me_3SiCHSO_2Ph)Li^+$ (1.05 equiv.), −78 °C, THF followed by Ac_2O, py, 4-*N*,*N*-dimethylaminopyridine, then Bu^n_4NF, THF, room temp., 2 h; xii, $LiEt_3BH$, THF, room temp., 4 h; xiii, O_3, EtOH, 0 °C, then an excess of $NaBH_4$, 1 h; xiv, *N*-phenylselenophthalimide–Bu^n_3P (3.5 equiv.), THF, room temp., 12 h; xv, O_3, −78 °C, 10 min, then in CCl_4, Et_2NH, at reflux; xvi, Bu^nLi, THF–hexamethylphosphoramide (5:1), −78 °C, 15 min, then $Bu^tMe_2SiO{-}CH_2{-}C{\equiv}C{-}CO_2Et$ followed by an excess of Bu^n_4NF, THF, room temp., 2 h; xvi, Na–Hg, MeOH, Na_2HPO_4 buffer, −20 °C, 2 h, then trifluoroacetic acid, H_2O, MeCN, room temp., 30 min; xvii, excess of *m*-chloroperbenzoic acid, CH_2Cl_2, Na_2HPO_4, room temp., 10 min; xix, Ac_2O, py, 4-*N*,*N*-dimethylaminopyridine, 2 h.

§ In order to achieve complete stereocontrol during the conjugate addition reaction, extensive experimental investigation was necessary, a full discussion of which will be presented at a later date.

dithiolane could only usefully be achieved by treatment with thallium(III) trifluoroacetate[6] to give (**10**) (69%) (m.p. 92—94 °C, ν_{max} 1710 cm^{-1}) (Scheme 1).

The incorporation of an homologated sulphone moiety was then necessary in order to facilitate later introduction of the butenolide group. Reaction of (**10**) with the lithio-anion of phenylsulphonyl(trimethylsilyl)methane followed by acetylation and treatment with tetra-n-butylammonium fluoride gave an intermediate vinyl sulphone (96%) (m.p. 181—183 °C). This was conjugatively reduced with $LiEt_3BH$, again in 96% yield, to afford (**11**) (m.p. 173—174 °C). Conversion of the vinyl side chain in (**11**) into the desired *exo*-methylene group required ozonolysis and borohydride reductive work-up to give (**12**, X = OH) (100%), followed by formation of the selenide (**12**, X = SePh) using *N*-phenylselenophthalimide–Bu^n_3P[7] (75%) and *syn*-elimination of the corresponding selenoxide to give (**13**) (86%)[^{1}H n.m.r. (250 MHz), δ 5.03 (1H, br. s), 4.87 (1H, br. s), 4.13 (1H, d, *J* 12.1 Hz), 3.85 (1H, dd, *J* 1 and 12.1 Hz), and 3.95 (1H, ddd, *J* 1, 5, and 12.1 Hz)]. The anion of (**13**) was treated with the novel butenolide synthon $Bu^tMe_2SiOCH_2$–C≡C–CO_2Et (prepared in two steps from prop-2-ynyl alcohol by reaction with t-butylmethylsilyl chloride–pyridine followed by magnesium acetylide formation and quenching with ethyl chloroformate). This gave an adduct which was immediately treated with tetra-n-butylammonium fluoride to effect deprotection and concomitant cyclization to the butenolide (**14**) in 45% overall yield, (m.p. 98—100 °C).¶ Reductive removal of the phenylsulphone group in (**14**) with sodium amalgam[8] and deprotection of the acetonide afforded the key *exo*-methylene diol (**15**) in 75% yield overall for the two steps [^{1}H n.m.r. (250 MHz) δ 5.83 (1H, m) 5.15 (1H, br. s), 5.02 (1H, br. s), and 4.73 (2H, m)].

Final elaboration to the natural product required epoxidation of (**15**) with *m*-chloroperbenzoic acid** in CH_2Cl_2 at room temperature and diacetylation with acetic anhydride in the presence of 4-*N*,*N*-dimethylaminopyridine to give ajugarin I (**1**) and 4-*epi*-ajugarin I (**16**) in 20 and 62% yields respectively (Scheme 2).

The synthetic material was identical in all respects to an authentic sample of the natural product. The 4-*epi*-isomer (**16**) gave spectral parameters identical to the previously synthesised compound[2e] and showed many similar features to a related model decalin system.[2d]

The synthetic strategy discussed above is clearly applicable to the preparation of many other clerodane related natural insect antifeedants.

We thank the S.E.R.C. for financial support, the Royal Society for an equipment grant, the Royal Society of Chemistry for the Hickinbottom Research Award (to S. V. L.), and Professor I. Kubo, University of California, for a sample of natural ajugarin I (**1**).

Received, 23rd February 1983; Com. 250

¶ Further examples of this new method for construction of butenolide derivatives will be reported separately.

** *m*-Chloroperbenzoic acid was used since planned epoxidation[2d] of (**15**) using $VO(acac)_2$–Bu^tOOH (Hacac = acetylacetone) led to substantial decomposition of the butenolide.

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