

COMMUNICATION

A Synthetic Approach to Chrysophaentin F.

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Accepted 00th January 20xx

DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

The chrysophaentins are a newly discovered natural product family displaying promising anti-infective activity. Herein we describe an approach to chrysophaentin F that uses an array of metal catalysed coupling reactions (Cu, Ni, Pd, W, Mo) to form key bonds.

The chrysophaentins were discovered by Bewley *et al.* in the methanoic extract of *Chrysophaeum taylori* alga during a screening study to identify promising new anti-infectives.¹ Eight closely related bioactives macrocycles were identified in the extract, named chrysophaentins A-H (1-5, 8-10), which were subsequently joined by the linear chrysophaentins E2 (6) and E3 (7) (Figure 1).² From a structural perspective they define a new class of marine natural products, the *bis*-diarylbutenes. Their core resembles that of the *bis*-bibenzyl family of natural products,^{3,4} but with two additional carbon centres and unsaturation in each of the chains linking the diaryl ether units. In assays against *Staphylococcus aureus* (SA), methicillin-resistant SA (MRSA) and multidrug-resistant SA (MDR-SA), chrysophaentins A (1), F (8) and H (10) were found to have useful potency, with minimum inhibitory concentrations (MIC₅₀) in the range of 0.8-9.5 µg/mL.¹ By contrast, the acyclic chrysophaentin E 5, and those with a bromide on arene A or arene C (2-4 and 9), showed greatly reduced activity. Chrysophaentin A (1) was also found to inhibit the bacterial cell division protein FtsZ, a popular target in antimicrobial drug discovery programmes.⁵

From a synthetic perspective the chrysophaentins have proven to be elusive targets. To date, all of the approaches described have sought to make one of the symmetrical chrysophaentins using a cyclodimerization strategy, yet none has succeeded in

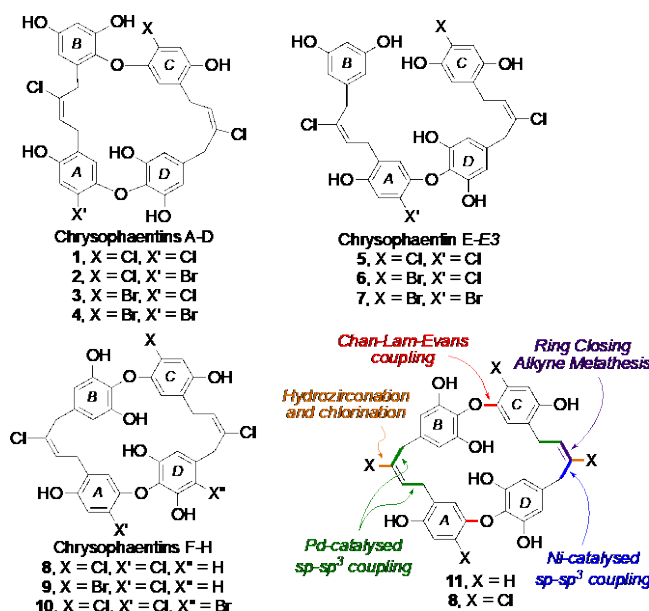


Figure 1 The chrysophaentins and our approach to their total synthesis

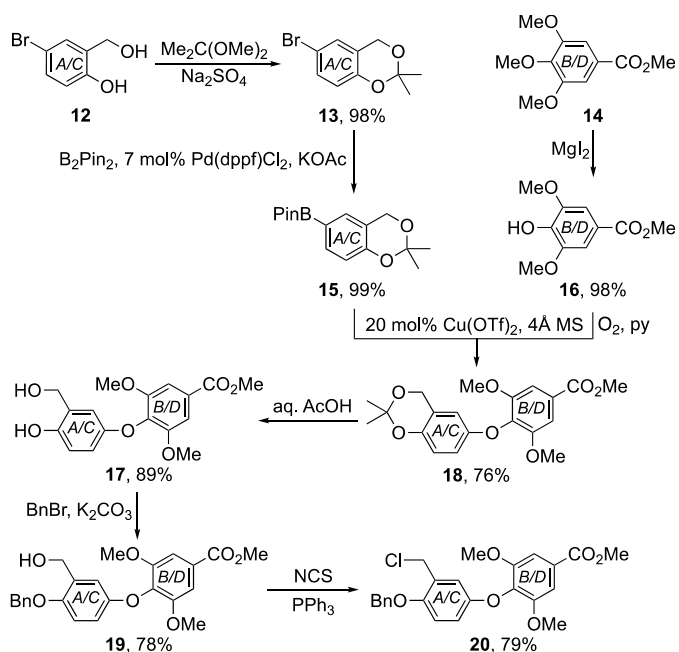
gaining access to the macrocyclic core.^{2,4-6} Herein we describe our work on the development of a general synthetic approach to the natural product family, exemplified by syntheses of the dehalogenated core 11 and, tentatively, of chrysophaentin F (8) in impure form. Our approach, summarized in Figure 1, has both divergent and convergent phases and uses an array of metal catalyzed reactions (Cu, Ni, Pd, W and Mo) to construct key bonds.

To test the validity of our approach, we first targeted the chrysophaentin F-H core 11 lacking all halogen substituents. Our synthesis began with the preparation of benzo-1,3-dioxane 15 and phenol 16 using standard protocols (Scheme 1).⁷⁻⁹ Their union to diaryl ether 18 was then achieved using a Chan-Lam-Evens coupling procedure.¹⁰ After examining a range of catalysts, solvents and reaction conditions, we found that it was best to employ Cu(OTf)₂ with 4Å molecular sieves in ethanol under an oxygen atmosphere. In that way diaryl ether 18 could be formed reliably in 76% yield. Sequential hydrolysis of the

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Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: experimental accounts with spectral details and copies of NMR spectra are available as supplementary information. See DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

acetal to phenol **17**; protection as benzyl ether **19** and conversion of the benzylic alcohol to the corresponding chloride,¹¹ gave the pivotal diaryl ether **20** in high overall yield.



Scheme 1 Synthesis of the pivotal diaryl ether **20**

At this juncture our synthesis entered a divergent phase where diaryl ether **20** was advanced to both the B-O-C and A-O-D subunits, **26** and **28** respectively (Scheme 2). Thus, using a Pd-catalysed procedure developed by Buchwald *et al.*¹² diaryl ether **20** was coupled with TMS-acetylene and 1-hexyne respectively, to afford alkynes **21** and **22** in excellent yield. The esters in each of these products were then reduced with LiAlH₄ to facilitate their conversion to halides **25** and **26**.¹¹ Alas, attempts to effect the coupling of benzyl bromide **25** and 1-hexyne using the aforementioned Buchwald procedure also induced alkyne to allene isomerisation.¹² However, by switching to a nickel catalyzed coupling reaction developed by Gau *et al.*,¹³ it was successfully coupled with hexynylAlEt₂ to give diyne **28** in good yield after deprotection of the silyl acetylene **27** with catalytic silver triflate.¹⁴ Pleasingly, the Buchwald procedure proved effective for the coupling of diaryl ether fragments **26** and **28** providing the macrocyclic precursor **29** in 50% yield.¹²

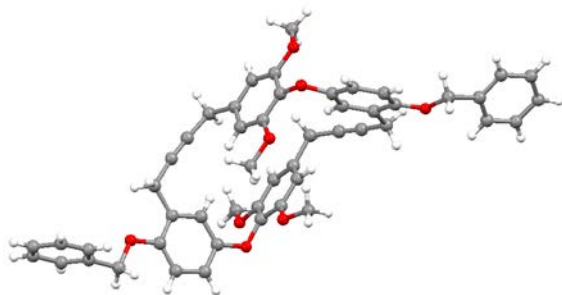
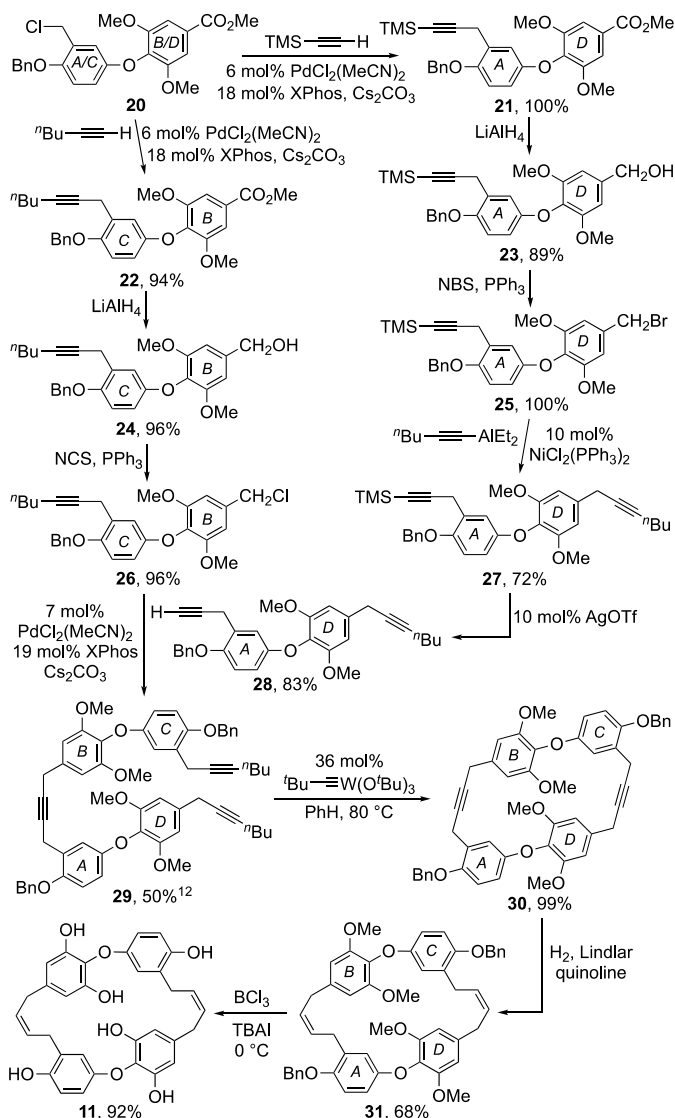


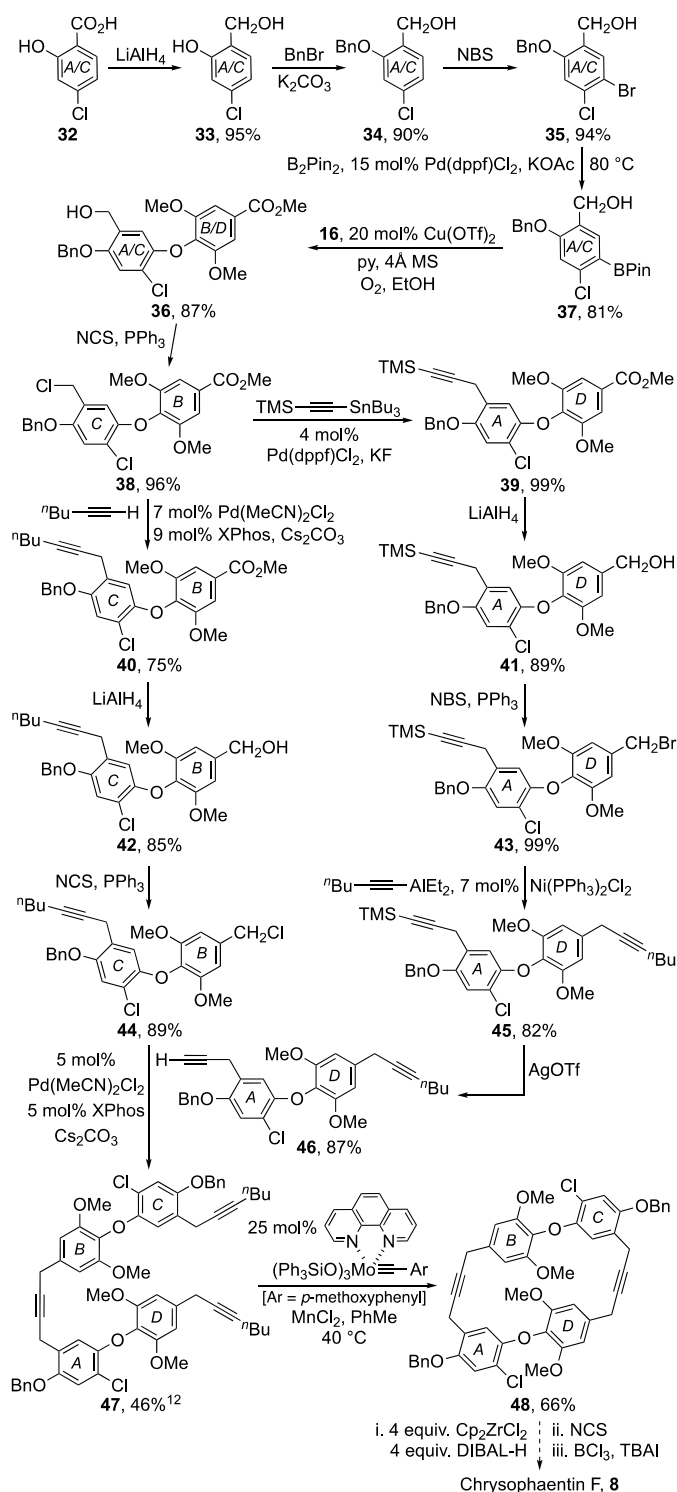
Figure 2 X-ray crystal structure of macrocyclic diyne **30**



Scheme 2 Synthesis of dehalogenated chrysopaentoin **11**

The stage was now set to enact our endgame strategy, which sought to use alkyne metathesis for the critical macrocyclization reaction.^{15,16} Pleasingly, this proved remarkably efficient as, after some optimization, triyne **29** was transformed into macrocyclic diyne **30** in near quantitative yield using Schrock's alkylidyne catalyst in toluene at 80 °C for 12 h under high dilution.¹⁶ Success was confirmed by X-ray crystallographic analysis (Figure 2). Selective hydrogenation of **30** using Lindlar's catalyst in the presence of quinoline next provided *bis-cis*-alkene **31**, leaving us the task of unmasking the six phenol residues. Although the double bonds in **31** proved sensitive to an array of standard deprotection protocols, a combination of BCl₃ and tetrabutylammonium iodide in DCM gave our target **11** in 92% yield (Scheme 2).¹⁷

The total synthesis of chrysopaentoin F **8** became our next target with the preparation of the keystone diaryl ether **38** becoming the immediate goal (Scheme 3). To that end, benzoic acid **32** was reduced with LiAlH₄ to diol **33**, which in turn was protected as its benzyl ether **34**. Arene bromination to **35** then facilitated a Miyaura borylation to **37** enabling its coupling



Scheme 3 A tentative synthesis of chrysophaentin F

to phenol **16** using a Chan-Lam-Evans procedure. Finally, conversion of the resulting benzyl alcohol **36** to the corresponding chloride **38** delivered the required diaryl ether. The divergent strategy used to prepare dehalochrysophaentin **11** was now applied to the synthesis of chrysophaentin F **8**. While most of the steps were easy to replicate, it proved advantageous to use a Stille coupling to advance chloride **38** to alkyne **39** as it proceeded reliably in near quantitative yield.¹⁸ All other steps in the sequence mirrored those demonstrated

previously, readily providing the B-O-C and A-O-D diaryl ether subunits **44** and **46** (Scheme 3). These were coupled using the Buchwald procedure to give triyne **47**, setting the stage for our end-game strategy.

Pleasingly, after some optimization, triyne **47** was transformed into macrocyclic diyne **48** in modest yield using Fürstner's molybdenum-phenanthroline pre-catalyst in toluene at 40 °C for 12 h.¹⁵ Hydrozirconation of **48** with Schwartz reagent (generated *in situ* by reduction of Cp₂ZrCl₂) followed by chlorination with NCS gave a complex mixture of products,^{19,20} that was partially separated by column chromatography (see Supplementary Information p S124-5). The main fractions were then combined and treated with BCl₃ and tetrabutylammonium iodide to unmask the phenolic residues. Purification of the product mixture by column chromatography gave a major fraction exhibiting spectral characteristics consistent with the formation of chrysophaentin F **8** in an impure state (see Supplementary Information for LRMS, ¹H and ¹³C NMR data).¹ Alas, attempts to purify the natural product further by preparative TLC and HPLC proved unrewarding with material losses putting paid to further endeavours.

In summary, we have developed a synthetic approach to chrysophaentin F **8** with the flexibility to allow all members of this family to be targeted. The approach demonstrates the value of i) Chan-Lam-Evans coupling reactions for the preparation of diaryl ethers with high steric demand;¹⁰ ii) Buchwald's, Gau's and Stille's procedures for effecting sp-sp³ coupling reactions between alkynes and benzyl halides;^{12,13} and iii) Fürstner's alkylidyne pre-catalyst for macrocyclisation through ring-closing alkyne metathesis.^{15,16}

Conflicts of interest

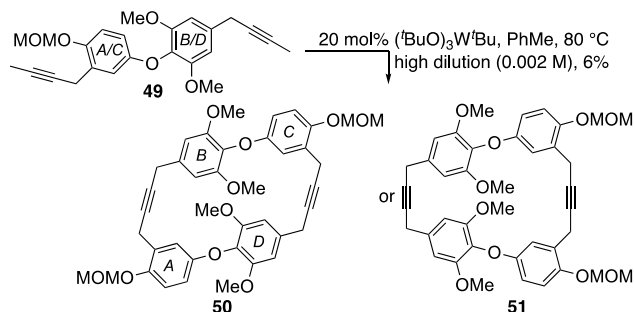
There are no conflicts to declare.

We thank Prof. A. Fürstner for his kind donation of the molybdenum-phenanthroline pre-catalyst. The University of Southampton VC Scholarship Scheme, the A*STAR ARAP Scheme, the ERDF (LabFact: InterReg V project 121) and the EPSRC [EP/K039466/1, EP/P013341/1 and EP/L003325/1] are thanked for their financial support.

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