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Citation for published version:

Man, WY, Rosair, GM & Welch, AJ 2015, 'Reduction-induced facile isomerisation of metallocarboranes: synthesis and crystallographic characterisation of 4-Cp-4,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁', *Dalton Transactions*, vol. 44, no. 35, pp. 15417-15419. <https://doi.org/10.1039/c5dt02506k>

Digital Object Identifier (DOI):

[10.1039/c5dt02506k](https://doi.org/10.1039/c5dt02506k)

Link:

[Link to publication record in Heriot-Watt Research Portal](#)

Document Version:

Peer reviewed version

Published In:

Dalton Transactions

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Reduction-induced facile isomerisation of metallocarboranes: synthesis and crystallographic characterisation of 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ †

Received 00th January 20xx,
Accepted 00th January 20xx

DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

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www.rsc.org/

One-electron reduction of 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ followed by heating to reflux in DME (bp 85 °C) induces isomerisation to 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁, a compound previously only synthesised at much higher temperatures (>380 °C). The 4,1,2- isomer has been thoroughly characterised both spectroscopically and crystallographically.

It is exactly 50 years since Hawthorne's first synthesis of metallocarboranes, specifically the icosahedral sandwich anions [Fe(C₂B₉H₁₁)₂]ⁿ⁻ (*n* = 1, 2).¹ Throughout the intervening period metallocarborane chemistry has been very heavily dominated by the icosahedron (reflecting the exceptional stability of *closo*-C₂B₁₀ and *closo*-CB₁₁ carboranes) with thousands of icosahedral *closo*-MC₂B₉ species having been synthesised and characterised.²

Cyclopentadienyl cobaltacarboranes can be considered as the archetypal metallocarboranes since {CpCo} is a simple and readily-available fragment isolobal with {BH}, and in fact CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ is known for seven of the nine possible isomers shown in Fig. 1, specifically the 3,1,2-, 2,1,7-, 2,1,12-, 4,1,2-, 2,1,8-, 2,1,9- and 9,1,7- isomers. 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁,³ 2-Cp-2,1,7-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁⁴ and 2-Cp-2,1,12-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁⁵ are prepared by metallation of the [7,8-*nido*-C₂B₉H₁₁]²⁻, [7,9-*nido*-C₂B₉H₁₁]²⁻ and [2,9-*nido*-C₂B₉H₁₁]²⁻ anions, respectively (which, in turn, are afforded by deboronation of commercially-available 1,2-, 1,7- and 1,12-*closo*-C₂B₁₀H₁₂). Gas-phase thermolysis of 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ leads to varying amounts of all the other six known isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ dependent on the temperature employed.⁶ The two "missing" isomers, 8-Cp-8,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ and 9-Cp-9,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁, both have adjacent cage C atoms (neither of which are directly bound to the metal) and so these isomers would be most unlikely to result from high-temperature thermolysis

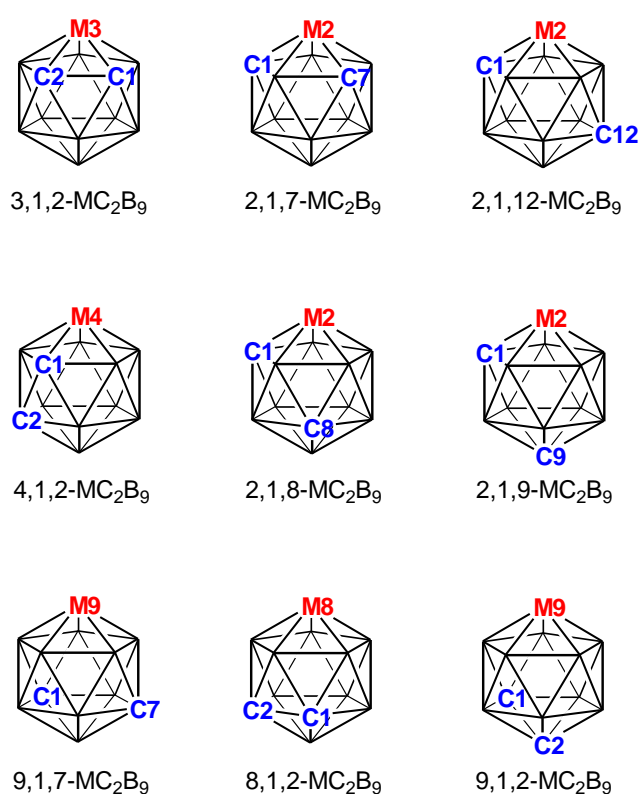


Fig. 1 The nine isomers of an icosahedral MC₂B₉ metallocarborane.

reactions since thermolysis classically causes C atom separation. However, derivatives of these isomers with the cage C atoms tethered together (via a trimethylene unit) could be obtained by gas-phase thermolysis of the tethered 3,1,2-precursor.⁶

Clearly the syntheses of 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁, 8-Cp-8,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ and 9-Cp-9,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ (the three isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ apart from 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ that have adjacent cage C atoms, by conventional chemistry) represent significant challenges. As part of our interest in this area we recently prepared 8-Cp-8,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ (and its 2,1,8- analogue) by a low-temperature

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† Dedicated to Professor M. Frederick Hawthorne in celebration of 50 years of metallocarboranes (see ref. 1).

Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI) available: Summary of crystal data for the eight crystallographic studies of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁. For 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁; CCDC 1405004. See DOI: 10.1039/x0xx00000x

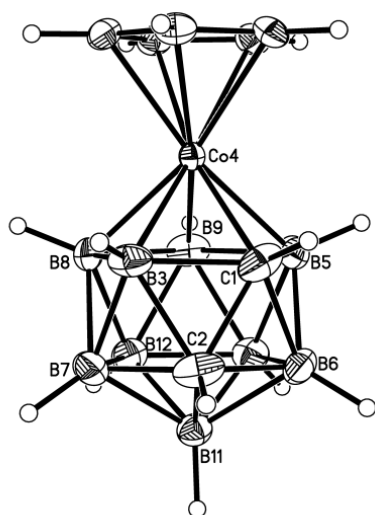


Fig. 2 Perspective view of 4-Cp-4,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁. Selected interatomic distances (Å): Co4–C1, 2.0115(19); Co4–B3, 2.023(2); Co4–B8, 2.079(2); Co4–B9, 2.102(2); Co4–B5, 2.079(2); Co4–Cp, 2.0655(18)–2.0857(18); C1–C2, 1.657(3).

route, specifically decapitation of the 13-vertex metallocarborane 4-Cp-4,1,8-closo-CoC₂B₁₀H₁₂ followed by oxidative closure of the 12-vertex dianion thereby produced.⁷ Both species were characterised spectroscopically and crystallographically, taking to five the number of isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ to have been structurally characterised, previously the 3,1,2-,⁸ 2,1,7-^{4a,b} and 2,1,12-^{4a} isomers and now the 8,1,2-⁷ and 2,1,8- isomers.⁷ We now report the synthesis by conventional chemistry of another of these “challenging” isomers.

Instead of high-temperature thermolysis, an alternative way to isomerise metallocarboranes is by 1-e reduction, sometimes in conjunction with mild heating,⁹ and Hanusa and Todd used this approach to prepare both the 2,1,7- and 2,1,12- isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ from 3-Cp-3,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁.^{9a} In repeating this synthesis we have now discovered that a small amount of the compound 4-Cp-4,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁,[‡] which we have fully characterised both spectroscopically and crystallographically,[§] is also afforded. This represents only the second synthesis of this compound and the first at relatively low temperature.

Treatment of 3-Cp-3,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ with 1.1 equivalents of sodium naphthalenide in DME followed by heating to reflux (85 °C) for 56 hrs and subsequent aerial oxidation resulted in partial isomerisation to a mixture of the 2,1,8-, 8,1,2-, 2,1,7- and 4,1,2- isomers, separated initially by column chromatography and ultimately by thin-layer chromatography. All products were identified by a combination of ¹H and ¹¹B NMR spectroscopies against authentic samples (2,1,8-isomer,⁷ 8,1,2-isomer⁷ and 2,1,7-isomer^{4b}). In the ¹H spectrum of 4-Cp-4,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ are observed a sharp integral-5 singlet at δ 5.44 ppm assigned to the Cp protons and two broad integral-1 resonances at δ 3.36 and 2.80 ppm assigned to the C_{cage}H atoms. The ¹¹B NMR

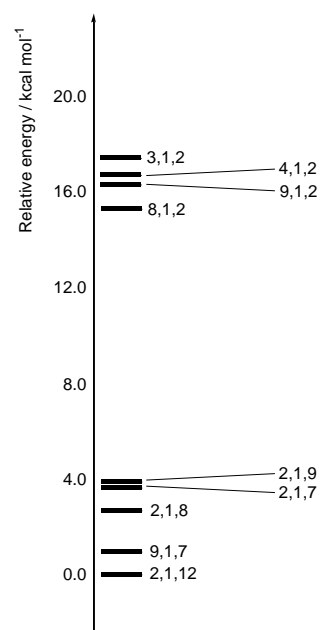


Fig. 3 Relative energies (kcal mol⁻¹) of the nine isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ (data taken from ref. 17).

spectrum consists of eight resonances between δ 9.1 and –17.5 ppm with integrals in the ratio 1:1:1:2:1:1:1:1 from high frequency to low frequency, confirming the asymmetric nature of the species.

The precise nature of the compound was established by a crystallographic study (Fig. 2) as part of which the identities of the cage C atoms were unambiguously determined by both the *Vertex-to-Centroid Distance*¹⁰ and *Boron-Hydrogen Distance*¹¹ methods. Key interatomic distances appear in the legend to Fig. 2. The Cp ligand is essentially parallel to the least-squares planes through atoms C1,B3,B8,B9,B5 [dihedral angle 0.37(8)°] and the plane through atoms C2,B6,B10,B12,B7 [dihedral angle 1.51(8)°].

4-Cp-4,1,2-closo-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ is the sixth of nine possible isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ to be structurally studied leaving only the 9,1,2-, 2,1,9- and 9,1,7- isomers remaining. There are two polymorphic forms of each of the 3,1,2- and 2,1,7- isomers, taking to eight the number of crystallographic studies of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ and, somewhat surprisingly, none of these show isomorphism (see ESI).

There are nine examples of 4,1,2-MC₂B₉ compounds in the Cambridge Structural Database,¹² but only one of these is the result of direct metallation of a 2,7-nido-C₂B₉ anion.¹³ In every other case the initial metallation is of a 7,8-nido-C₂B₉ anion followed by isomerisation of the 3,1,2-MC₂B₉ species thus formed (sometimes only transiently) into the 4,1,2-MC₂B₉ final product. Although there is evidence that the relief of steric crowding plays a part in several of these 3,1,2- to 4,1,2- isomerisations,¹⁴ this is not obvious in every case.¹⁵ Moreover, in examples where the cage C atoms are not tethered together it is not at all clear why the more common 3,1,2- to 2,1,8- isomerisation¹⁶ is not observed. On the other hand a common feature of many of the 3,1,2-MC₂B₉ species which isomerise to 4,1,2-MC₂B₉ is that they have a relatively electron-rich metal

centre (Ni^{II} or Pd^{II}), perhaps suggesting an analogy with the reduction-induced 3,1,2- to 4,1,2- isomerisation of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ observed herein.

In Fig. 3 are shown the relative energies of the nine isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ from DFT calculations.¹⁷ They fall into two distinct groups, those with the cage C atoms adjacent (3,1,2-, 4,1,2-, 9,1,2- and 8,1,2-) at relatively high energy and those with the cage C atoms separated (2,1,9-, 2,1,7-, 2,1,8-, 9,1,7- and 2,1,12-) at lower energy. This work has demonstrated a low-temperature synthesis of the second-least thermodynamically stable isomer.

Conclusions

In conclusion we have shown that 1-e reduction of 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ followed by relatively mild heating affords (a small amount of) the isomer 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁, which we have fully characterised including a crystallographic study. This takes to six the number of isomers of CpCoC₂B₉H₁₁ to be isolated by low-temperature routes, and experiments targeting the remaining isomers yet to be afforded by conventional chemistry (9,1,2-, 2,1,9- and 9,1,7-) are currently in hand. Access to a complete set of isomers of this archetypal metallocarborane will afford a unique opportunity for detailed comparative study which we believe will be of fundamental interest.

Acknowledgement

We thank the EPSRC for support (project EP/I031545/1).

Notes and references

† Experimental procedure: to a freshly prepared solution of sodium naphthalenide (1.1 eq, 0.64 mmol) was added a solution of 3-Cp-3,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ (0.15 g, 0.58 mmol) in dry, degassed DME (12 ml). The reagents were heated to reflux for 56 h, oxidised using a water aspirator and the solvent removed *in vacuo*. Purification of the crude residue using column chromatography in an eluent system of 30:70 dichloromethane:petroleum ether gave naphthalene (*R*_f = 0.76), two yellow bands, yellow1 (*R*_f = 0.46) and yellow2 (*R*_f = 0.28), and unreacted cobaltacarborane starting material (*R*_f = 0.14). Using ¹H and ¹¹B NMR spectroscopies, yellow1 was identified as 2-Cp-2,1,8-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ with a trace of 8-Cp-8,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ whilst re-purification of yellow2 using preparative TLC in an eluent system of 20:80 ethyl acetate:petroleum ether gave 2-Cp-2,1,7-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ (*R*_f = 0.18) and 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁ (*R*_f = 0.10) in trace amounts. For 4-Cp-4,1,2-*closo*-CoC₂B₉H₁₁: ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 298 K); δ 5.44 (s, 5H, C₉H₅), 3.36 (s, 1H, C_{cage}H), 2.80 (s, 1H, C_{cage}H). ¹¹B NMR (CDCl₃, 298 K); δ 9.1 (1B), 0.8 (1B), -1.9 (1B), -5.7 (2B), -7.3 (1B), -12.0 (1B), -15.3 (1B), -17.5 (1B). EIMS; *m/z* 256.1(M⁺).

§ Crystal data: C₇H₁₆B₉Co, *M* = 256.42, monoclinic, *P*2₁/*c*, *a* = 11.6409(12), *b* = 6.6488(6), *c* = 16.1299(15) Å, β = 93.823(5)°, *V* = 1245.6(2) Å³, *Z* = 4, *D*_c = 1.367 Mg m⁻³, μ = 1.336 mm⁻¹, *F*(000) = 520. Data to θ_{max} = 32.00° collected at 100(2) K on a Bruker X8 diffractometer using Mo-*K*_α radiation. 4297 independent reflections out of 29748 measured, *R*_{int} = 0.0421. *S* = 1.102 for all data, and *R*₁ = 0.0377, *wR*₂ = 0.0803 for 3596 data with *I* > 2σ(*I*). Max. and min. e-density 0.872 and -0.573 e Å⁻³, respectively.

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