Supplementary Information

## **A Non-Canonical Nucleophile Unlocks a New Mechanistic Pathway in a Designed Enzyme**

Amy E. Hutton<sup>1</sup>, Jake Foster<sup>1</sup>, Rebecca Crawshaw<sup>1</sup>, Florence J. Hardy<sup>1</sup>, Linus O. Johannissen<sup>1</sup>, Thomas M. Lister<sup>1</sup>, Emilie F. Gérard<sup>1</sup>, Zachary Birch-Price<sup>1</sup>, Richard Obexer<sup>1</sup>, Sam Hay<sup>1</sup>, Anthony P. Green<sup>1\*</sup>

\*Corresponding author

<sup>1</sup>Manchester Institute of Biotechnology, School of Chemistry, The University of Manchester, Manchester, UK.

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### Supplementary Figures 1- 16



**Supplementary Figure 1: Identification of a suitable starting point for evolution.** Relative conversions of BH32<sup>1</sup> and selected evolved descendants<sup>2</sup> with either His (grey scale) or MeHis (blue) as the catalytic nucleophile at position 23. Biotransformations were performed using **1** (15 mM), **2** (1.5 mM) and enzyme (60 µM) in PBS (pH 7.4) with 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent and analysed following 5 h incubation at 30 °C. Error bars represent the standard deviation of measurements made in triplicate. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Figure 2: Comparison of pH profiles of BH32.8 and BHMeHis1.0.** Reaction conversions of BH32.8<sup>2</sup> (grey) and BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 (blue) across a range of pHs ranging from pH 5.8 to 8.0. Reactions performed using 1 (15 mM), 2 (1.5 mM), 60 µM enzyme in PBS at the stated pH using 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent and analysed following 21 h incubation at 30 °C. Error bars represent standard deviation of measurement made in triplicate. In addition to MBH product **3** an aldol side product (**S1**) was formed in low abundance (data not shown). Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Figure 3: UPLC analysis of the MBH reaction catalysed by either BHMeHis1.0 or BHMeHis1.8. A)**  Ultra-high performance liquid chromatography (UPLC) trace for the MBH reaction between 2-cyclohexen-1-one (**1**) and 4-nitrobenzaldehyde (**2**) forming MBH product (**3**) and an aldol side product (**S1**). **B)** An expanded view of the UPLC trace presented in A between 1.1 and 1.8 min. After evolution, BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 (red, 10 µM) forms MBH product 3 as the exclusive product as opposed to the starting variant BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 (grey, 10 µM or black, 60 µM). Reactions performed using **1** (15 mM), **2** (1.5 mM), PBS pH 6.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent and analysed following 23 h incubation at 30 °C.







**Supplementary Figure 5: Kinetic characterization of BHMeHis1.0, BHMeHis1.8 and BHMeHis1.8 MeHis23His.**  Michaelis-Menten plots for the MBH reaction between 1 and 2 catalysed by either: A) BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8, B) BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 and C) BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 MeHis23His. Assays were performed at either a fixed concentration of 1 (25 mM) and varying concentrations of **2**, or a fixed concentration of **2** (2 mM) and varying concentrations of **1**. The plots show the averaged initial rates of triplicate data, along with error bars, which were fitted to the Michaelis-Menten equation using Origin software. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



Supplementary Figure 6: Total turnover numbers achieved by BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. Time-course to determine the total turnover number of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. Reactions were performed using 1 (50 mM) and 2 (10 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent, using either 0.1 mol% (black), 0.05 mol% (grey) or 0.01 mol% (red) of BHMeHis1.8. Error bars represent standard deviation of measurement made in triplicate. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



Supplementary Figure 7: Temperature profile of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. Reaction conversions of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 across a range of temperatures from 25 to 80 °C after 2 h incubation. Reactions were performed using **1** (15 mM), **2** (1.5 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 using 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent and 3 µM BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. Error bars represent standard deviation of measurement made in triplicate. Aldol by-product (**S1**) only observed at temperatures above 60 °C (data not shown). Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Figure 8: NMR traces of crude reaction and purified 3 produced from a preparative-scale biotransformation.** <sup>1</sup>H NMR traces (400 MHz; CDCl<sub>3</sub>) showing; Top: crude product extracted from the preparative-scale biotransformation of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 (10 µM) using 1 (50 mM) and 2 (10 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent for 13 h at 30 °C. Bottom: Isolated MBH product **3** following purification by flash chromatography. Spectral data is consistent with literature values.<sup>3</sup>



**Supplementary Figure 9: Crystal structures of BHMeHis1.0 and BHMeHis1.8.** A cartoon presentation (left) of the superimposed coordinates of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 (grey) and BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 (red). Mutations installed during evolution cause minimal changes to the overall protein fold, with a secondary structure root mean square deviation of 0.47 Å. The MeHis23 nucleophile is shown as atom coloured ball and sticks in both structures, and Trp42 is shown in BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. A zoom of the active site (right) shows a ~120° rotation in the imidazole ring has occurred during evolution.



Supplementary Figure 10: Structural parameters for MD simulation of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 apo complex. A) protein heavy-atom rmsd (main and side chain atoms) relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure. **B**) MeHis23 rmsd relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure. **C**) Trp42 rmsd relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure.



**Supplementary Figure 11: Models for calculation of Trp42 stabilisation.** For simplicity only models with methyl indole for calculating ΔE<sup>2</sup> (equation 2) are shown. **A** and **C**) Int1 models. **B** and **D**) MeHis models. \* indicates atom kept fixed during energy minimisation in the constrained models **A** and **B**. **E**) Table of ΔΔE energies calculated using either DFT or MP2 for models **B** and **D** along with the energies calculated for a Trp42Phe mutation with Phe modelled as toluene.



**Supplementary Figure 12: Docking of MBH product 3 into the crystal structure of BHMeHis1.8.** The product (*R*)- **3** (shown as atom-coloured sticks, carbons black) was docked into the crystal structure of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 using MolsoftICM64-Pro (version 3.9-2d). To ensure a productive pose for catalysis, a distance restraint of 4 Å between the MeHis and the position of nucleophilic attack was imposed on the calculation (shown as a blue dashed line). Glu26 is within hydrogen-bonding distance of O1 of **3** (black dashed line).



**Supplementary Figure 13: Changes in reaction rate upon mutation of Glu26 in BHMeHis1.8 to either Gln or Ala.** Reactions were performed using **1** (25 mM), **2** (2 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent. **A)** BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8, **B)** BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 Glu26Gln and **C)** BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 Glu26Ala. Error bars represent standard deviation of measurement made in triplicate. **D)** Table of rates determined from linear plots with standard deviation of triplicate measurements stated. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Figure 14. Time course of the inhibition of BHMeHis1.8 and its variants.** Stopped flow analysis of mechanistic inhibitor binding,<sup>2</sup> through absorbance measurements at 325 nm to BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 (red), BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 Glu26Ala (blue) and BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 MeHis23His (grey). Reactions were performed using (p-methoxyphenyl)(6oxocyclohex-1-en-1-yl)methyl acetate inhibitor (25µM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 3% (v/v) acetonitrile as cosolvent and 10 µM enzyme at room temperature. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



Supplementary Figure 15: Representative MD snapshot of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8:Int2H complex where the proton has **been transferred from Glu(H)26 to Int2 (model B) from a 500 ns simulation**. **Int2** (black) and key amino acid residues (blue) are shown in ball and stick representation with hydrogen bonds shown as black dashed lines.



**Supplementary Figure 16. Structural parameters for MD simulation of BHMeHis1.8:Int2 complex with a protonated glutamic acid (Glu(H)26) (model A).** (**a**) protein heavy-atom RMSD (main and side chain atoms) relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure, (**b**) active site RMSD relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure. The active site is defined as residues with at least one atom within 5 Å of the MeHis23\_**Int2** adduct in the starting structure (residues number 10, 11, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 42, 45, 49, 68, 91, 92, 94, 122, 124, 128, 132). (**c**) O-H distance between the putative proton donor Glu(H)26 and the C3-alkoxide of **Int2**. (**d**) O-H distance between the C2 proton and the GluH26 carbonyl oxygen.



**Supplementary Figure 17. Structural parameters for MD simulation of BHMeHis1.8:Int2H complex where the proton has been transferred from Glu(H)26 to Int2 (model B).** (**a**) protein heavy-atom RMSD (main and side chain atoms) relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure, (**b**) active site RMSD relative to the first (grey) and average (blue) structure. The active site is defined by the same residues as for model A (Supplementary Figure 14). (**c**) O-H distances between the C2-proton and each of the two oxygen atoms of Glu26 (one atom in blue and one in grey).



**Supplementary Figure 18. Computed reaction profile for BHMeHis1.8 starting from Int2H.** The potential energies (black) and zero-point energy corrected energies (blue). The potential energies relative to Int2H are shown for each intermediate, with the barrier height for the transition state of that step (italics). The dotted line connecting P and P' indicates a reorganisation of the product state which occur on the sub-ns scale in MD simulations.

# BHMeHis1.8 QM/MM models



**Supplementary Figure 19. QM/MM models along the BHMeHis1.8 reaction coordinate.** Transition states and intermediates along the reaction coordinate are shown. The protein backbone is shown as a grey ribbon. Trp42, Trp124, and Phe132 are shown as atom-coloured sticks, with light blue carbon atoms. Key residues, MeHis23 and Glu(H)26, and substrates, 2-cyclohexen-1-one and *p*-nitrobenzaldehyde are shown in atom coloured ball and stick representation with light blue and grey carbon atoms, respectively. Selected hydrogen atoms and water molecules are shown to aid mechanistic understanding.



**Supplementary Figure 20. MD simulation showing the rapid rearrangement of product bound structure P from QM/MM.** Left: The optimized product bound structure from QM/MM, P and a MD frame of the BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 product complex after 0.06 ns and the MD structure representing the most populated pose over three 50 ns runs. Right: Structural parameters for the MD simulation of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 product complex. **A**) protein heavy-atom RMSD (main and side chain atoms) relative to the first structure of Run 1 (grey), Run 2 (orange) and Run 3 (blue). **B)** Product RMSD relative to the first structure of Run 1 (grey), Run 2 (orange) and Run 3 (blue).



**Supplementary Figure 21: Changes in activity along the evolutionary trajectory upon mutation of MeHis23**  nucleophile to histidine. Relative conversions of variants along the evolutionary trajectory of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 with either MeHis (red) or His (grey) as the catalytic nucleophile at position 23. Biotransformations were performed using **1** (15 mM), **2** (1.5 mM) and enzyme (1.5 µM) in PBS pH 6.0 with 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent and analysed following 3 h incubation at 30 °C. Error bars represent the standard deviation of measurements made in triplicate. To eliminate errors arising from determination of low conversions, variants BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0, BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 MeHis23His and BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.2 MeHis23His were monitored over a longer timeframe and conversions were extrapolated using linear regression. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.

### 1. Supplementary Tables 1-9

Supplementary Table 1: Directed evolution of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8. Strategy employed for each round of evolution using either random mutagenesis or site-saturation mutagenesis, stating mutations introduced in each round. Starting template (BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0) originated from our previous MBH evolution<sup>2</sup> where His23 has been mutated to MeHis.



[1] The gene sequences used as the template each round of evolution shown in italics  $^{[2]}$  BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0 = BH32.8 with His23MeHis mutation

**Supplementary Table 2: Enantiomeric excess of BHMeHis1.0, BHMeHis1.8 and selected variants.** Reactions were performed using **1** (15 mM), **2** (1.5 mM), PBS pH 6.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent and analysed by UPLC following 23 h incubation at 30 °C. All reactions ran with 10 µM enzyme apart from BHMeHis1.0 (60 µM).

**<sup>a</sup>** Preparative-scale biotransformation. Performed using enzyme (10 µM), **1** (50 mM), **2** (10 mM), PBS pH 7.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent.



**Supplementary Table 3: Kinetic characterization of BHMeHis1.0, BHMeHis1.8 and BHMeHis1.8 MeHis23His.** Kinetic constants derived from global fitting of the combined V<sub>0</sub> vs [1] and V<sub>0</sub> vs [2] steady state kinetic data (Supplementary Figure 5) using a random order binding model. Saturating conditions for either **1** or **2** were not achieved for BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0. K<sub>M</sub> values quoted are the apparent Michaelis constants. N.D. = not determined. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Table 4: Conversions of MBH reactions catalysed by BHMeHis1.0, BHMeHis1.8 and selected**  variants. MBH reaction conversions of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.0, BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 and selected variants after 2 h using 1 (15 mM), 2 (2 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 3% MeCN as cosolvent.

<sup>a</sup> Conversion for preparative-scale biotransformation performed using **1** (50 mM), **2** (10 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent.



Supplementary Table 5: Effect of cosolvent on BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 activity. Reaction conversions of BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 with varying cosolvent loadings from 3% to 50% (v/v) of either MeCN or DMSO. Reactions performed using **1** (15 mM), 2 (1.5 mM) in PBS pH 7.0 with 3 µM BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 and 2 h incubation at 30 °C. Standard deviation of measurements made in triplicate. N.D. = not detectable. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



**Supplementary Table 6: Reaction conditions for the substate scope to synthesise 3 and 4a-k.** All reactions were performed in triplicate with 1mol% BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 (unless otherwise stated) at 30°C in PBS pH 7.0 with 20% (v/v) DMSO as cosolvent. Conversion to product stated. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



 $a$  Reaction ran with 0.5mol% BH $_{MeHis}$ 1.8

 $^{\text{b}}$  Extinction coefficients of 3276 and 724 mM<sup>-1</sup>cm<sup>-1</sup> calculated for aldehyde and product, respectively, at 254nm.

#### **Supplementary Table 7: Data collection and refinement statistics.**

<sup>a</sup>Values in parentheses are for highest resolution shell. <sup>b</sup>R-free was calculated using ~5% of the data separate from the rest.



**Supplementary Table 8: Kinetic isotope effect (KIE) and solvent kinetic isotope (SKIE) effects for BHMeHis1.8 and**  selected variants. Reactions were performed with the relevant enzyme (1 µM BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8, 3 µM BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 MeHis23His and 10 µM BH<sub>MeHis</sub>1.8 Glu26Gln) using 1 or S2 (25 mM), 2 (2 mM) in both deuterated and nondeuterated PBS buffer at pH 7.0 with 3% (v/v) MeCN as cosolvent. KIE and SKIE values calculated from reactions performed in triplicate. Source Data are provided as a Source Data file.



<b>Variant</b>	<b>Expected Mass</b>	<b>Observed Mass</b>
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.0 (BH32.8 His 23 MeHis)	27593.73	27593.4
$BH_{Mellis}$ 1.1	27567.60	27567.4
$BH_{Mellis}$ 1.2	27624.66	27624.4
$\rm BH_{_{M{\rm e}{\rm His}}}1.3$	27522.52	27522.2
$BH_{Mellis}$ 1.4	27546.59	27546.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.5	27387.36	27387.0
$BH_{Mellis}$ 1.6	27520.51	27520.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.7	27508.55	27508.4
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8	27515.54	27515.5
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8 MeHis23His	27501.51	27501.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8 MeHis23Ala	27435.44	27435.3
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8 Glu26Ala	27457.50	27457.3
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8 Glu26Gln	27514.52	27514.2
$BH_{M \text{eff}}$ 1.8 (strep tag)	27732.84	27732.4
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.8 MeHis23His (strep tag)	27718.81	27718.3
BH32.8 (BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.0 MeHis23His)	27579.70	27579.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.1 MeHis23His	27553.57	27553.4
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.2 MeHis23His	27610.63	27610.4
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.3 MeHis23His	27508.49	27508.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.4 MeHis23His	27532.56	27532.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.5 MeHis23His	27373.33	27373.2
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.6 MeHis23His	27506.48	27506.4
BH <sub>MeHis</sub> 1.7 MeHis23His	27494.52	27494.4
<b>BH32 His23MeHis</b>	27648.58	27648.6
BH32.6 His23MeHis	27525.55	27545.4
BH32.9 His23MeHis	27716.77	27716.6
BH32.12 His23MeHis	27529.59	27529.4

**Supplementary Table 9: Experimental and calculated mass values of enzymes in this study.**

## **Supplementary Table 10: Table of primers used in this study**



## **Supplementary Table 11: Table of primers used for library generation**























**2. DNA and protein sequence for the most active variant BHMeHis1.8.**

### **BHMeHis1.8:**

ATGATTCGTGCGGTATTCTTTGATAGCCTGGGTACTCTGATTAGCGTTGAAGGCGCTTATAAAATTTA GGTGAAAGAGATGGAGGAAGTGCTGGGTGACTATCCGCTGAACCCGCGAACCCTGTGGGACGAATTTG ATAAACTGTTTAAGGAAGCGTTCTCTAACTATGCGGGCAAACCGTATCGTCCGGCGCGTTTTATCCTG GAAGAAGTAATGCGTAAACTGGCGGAAAAGTACGGTTTCAAATACCCTGGAAACTTGCAGGAAATCGG CGTGCGTATGGCGCGACGCTACGGCGGGCTGTACCCGGAAGTGGTGGAAGTACTGAAATCTCTGAAAG GTAAATATCACGTTGGCGTGATCCTGAATTGGGATACCGAGAATGCCACGGCATTCCTGGACGCACTG GGCATCAAAGACCTGTTCGATTCCATCACCACGTCTGAAGAAGCTGGTTTCGCTTATCCGCACCCACG CATCCTCGAACTGGCTCTGAAGAAAGCCGGCGTTAAAGGCGAGAAAGCAGTGTACGTTGGTGACAACC CGGTCAAAGACGCGGGTGGTTCTAAGAACCTGGGTATGACTAGCATCCTGCTGGATCGTAAAGGTGAG AAACGTGAATTCTGGGATAAGGCGGACTTTCGTGTCTCCGACCTGCGCGAAGTTATTAAGATTGTTGA CGAACTGAACGGTCAGGGCTCTCTCGAGCACCACCACCACCACCACTGA

MIRAVFFDSLGTLISVEGAYKI**(MHS)**VKEMEEVLGDYPLNPRTLWDEFDKLFKEAFSNYAGKPYRPA RFILEEVMRKLAEKYGFKYPGNLQEIGVRMARRYGGLYPEVVEVLKSLKGKYHVGVILNWDTENATAF LDALGIKDLFDSITTSEEAGFAYPHPRILELALKKAGVKGEKAVYVGDNPVKDAGGSKNLGMTSILLD RKGEKREFWDKADFRVSDLREVIKIVDELNGQGSLEHHHHHH

MHS = MeHis

## **Supplementary References**

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- 3. Luo, S., Wang, P. G. & Cheng, J. P. Remarkable rate acceleration of imidazole-promoted Baylis-Hillman reaction involving cyclic enones in basic water solution. *J. Org. Chem*. **69**, 555–558 (2003).