Reteporellina babelensis (Chapman, 1941)
Plate 69A-C

Retepora babelensis Chapman, 1941: 147.
Reteporellina babelensis: Hayward, 2004: 319, figs 12A-F.
Reteporellina cruciformis Gordon & d'Hondt, 1997: 66, figs 185-187.
Reteporellina cruciformis: Hayward, 2000: 129, figs 14a-d.
Reteporellina denticulata: Liu, Yin & Ma, 2001: 695, pl. 76, figs 1-3.

Material examined

SBMNH 365831-834, **501-87**; NHM 2003.1.8.2, Paul's Reef, Efate, Vanuatu; NHM 1892.1.28.110, Holothuria Bank, 24-34 m; NHM 2003.1.8.1, New Caledonia, Chesterfield, îlot du passage, 48 m, 8 May 2001, P. Labuite.

Description

Colony erect, branches divide regularly to develop an open, cup-shaped fan attached to substratum by an encrusting base. Fenestrulae oval, long and narrow (ca 1.30 x 0.60 mm), narrow trabeculae consist of autozooids in three or four alternating series. Abfrontal kenozooids granular, distinct, separated by raised edges, one or two very small, marginal pores present; small, acutely triangular avicularia seen basally and along edges of trabeculae, rostrum flush with frontal shield, distal tip hooked, proximally directed. Autozooids at growing margin elongate, flask-shaped (ca 0.35 x 0.15 mm), distinct, separated by raised sutures. Frontal shield convex, smooth, usually two, rarely one or more, marginal pores present proximally. Primary orifice suborbicular (Gordon & d'Hondt, 1997) hidden by a peristome. Peristome deep, flaring proximally and laterally in early ontogeny, projecting away from branch axis, the rim with a median sinus developed proximally, laterally the rim developed into short spiked processes. The peristomial sinus is continuous with a vertical groove in peristome, terminating above the primary orifice with a pair of stout cusps; a similar pair of cusps is present on inner distal surface of peristome (Hayward, 2000). No oral spines. Large avicularia appear later in ontogeny on peristomial rim of many autozooids, originating at proximolateral corner of peristome and arching around rim in a medial direction, rostrum almost rectangular, slightly narrower in middle, wider distally, with two asymmetrical cusps developed, most distal cusp taller and hooked, mandible curved with a truncated angular, distal tip, complete crossbar without columella. Similar avicularia occur along margins of some autozooids, proximally directed. Ovicell rounded, slightly wider distally, single, narrow, frontal fissure extending over half its length, aperture crescent-shaped, with an elongate semi-elliptical labellum.

Remarks

Reteporellina babelensis is characterised, primarily, by its large peristomial avicularium with its asymmetrical distal cusps. *R. babelensis* is also distinguished from other *Reteporellina* species by the ovicells which has a broad labellum with rounded edges.

Some of the present material, upon which the above description is based, appears more heavily calcified than that illustrated by Hayward (2000, 2004) and the frontal fissure in the ovicell is longer. However, the peristomial avicularia are identical to those he described and illustrated. The morphology of the abfrontal kenozooids and avicularia are described here for the first time. Irregularly branched fragments are suggested to be the result of regeneration from detached portions of a colony (Hayward, 2000, 2004).

Reteporellina babelensis (Chapman, 1941). Tilbrook, 2006, p.308, Pl.69A-C

Reteporellina babelensis appears very similar to the species, from the Caribbean coast of Panama, illustrated by Winston (1986: figs 51-53) as *R. evelinae* Marcus, 1955. The Panamanian specimen shows a large peristomial avicularia, it differs only slightly from western Pacific material in having a peristomial rim with longer spiked processes in autozooids in early ontogeny.

Distribution

Originally described from Babel Island, off Tasmania, *Reteporellina babelensis* has subsequently been recorded from Mauritius, NW Australia, East and South China Seas, Fiji, Palau, Vanuatu and New Zealand. Several colonies of *R. babelensis* were found from the Anuha Reefs, Florida Islands, Solomon Islands. *R. babelensis* is therefore well established in the tropical Indo-West Pacific, and the Coral Sea in particular.