



V26B Station Information
Last Updated 12/27/2009

Welcome to the V26B station! This document will help explain how things are hooked up, and what to do and not do, when using the V26B station. It also contains some local contact information of people on Antigua who have helped us in the past, in case you need anything.

Your Arrival

When you arrive at the airport, first you will go through immigration, who will stamp your passport. They may ask where you are staying. If you are staying at a hotel, tell them which one. If you are staying at the V26B station, tell them you are staying with "a friend on Factory Road in Gunthorpes".

You will be given both a combined immigration/customs form, usually on the plane, to fill out. The customs form is a little confusing, and is a new requirement starting in 2005. Unless you are bringing something down to sell to a resident of Antigua, you should fill out the form with all zeros (0) for any value of merchandise you are bringing. The form they use is similar to the US Customs form, so it will look familiar. If you are not declaring anything, get in the green customs line after you pick up your luggage. Only go in the red line if you have something to declare.

Next you will collect your luggage and go through customs. USE THE SKYCAP to take your luggage through customs. The customs officer is less likely to ask to open your bags when they are on the skycap's handcart! You should tip the skycap \$5 US minimum when he gets your bags outside the customs area. If the customs officer asks to look through your bags, don't panic, most of them are familiar with ham radio. Have a copy of your US and Antiguan ham licenses packed with the equipment.

When you pack, avoid packing your ham gear in the original manufacturer's box. Try to get a pelican box or similar case for your equipment, or put it in a suitcase if you can. New boxes look to the customs official like you are bringing equipment in to sell to a local resident, and they might ask you to pay duty for it. Ham radio is duty-free on Antigua. If they start asking you to pay duty, explain to them you are bringing the equipment back out with you, and are not selling anything to a local resident. Most of the customs officials are used to hams bringing in radios and amplifiers, so you should have no problem.

On rare occasion they have asked for a deposit to insure you will take the equipment back out of the country. Avoid this if at all possible, complain and argue that you are taking the gear back out with you. It will only complicate your departure if you leave a deposit. This has only rarely ever happened, and not at all in the last five years, so it shouldn't be a problem. If this does come up, call some of the local contacts below for help dealing with the customs officials.

Again, avoid packing your gear in cardboard boxes that identify what it is! The customs officials focus on that.

The customs official may also ask where you are staying. Give them the hotel name or tell them you are staying with a friend on Factory Road in Gunthorpes.

Local Transportation

The car rental booth is just outside the customs area at the airport. They drive on the left on Antigua, and drive a little crazy at times. Cars are fairly expensive to rent, so unless you plan on doing a lot of traveling on the island, consider a cab. If you do rent a car, I suggest you do take the insurance. You will also need a visitors drivers license which the car rental agency will provide to you at the time of the rental for \$20 US. I use Matthews car rental which can be booked online at the Thrifty Car Rental web site. You can also just go to the booth and get one without a booking.

If you rent a car, make sure the car checkout form is filled out in detail with every single scratch and dent on the car noted. Most rental cars have some minor damage when you get them, and you don't want to get stuck paying for something you did not do.

If you have an accident with a rental car, you must call both the rental car company and the police. The phone number for the car rental company is on your rental contract, and you call 911 for the police. Expect the police to take a long time to arrive, but they will come and take a report on the accident.

Cab drivers are available at the airport and at the hotel. If you are not renting a car, get your cab driver's cell phone number so you can call him to arrange for a pick-up if needed at the shack

Currency

Antigua uses the Eastern Caribbean dollar, commonly referred to as EC. There is no need to change your US money to EC as all places on the island accept either US or EC. If you are coming from outside of the USA, I suggest you change your currency into US dollars and not EC, since the US currency is accepted anywhere on the island. You may be given your change back in EC, but all places on the island gladly take the US dollar. The government uses 2.5 as the conversion factor, most businesses use 2.6, and banks and Cable & Wireless use 2.7 as the conversion factor.

Licensing

A visiting ham radio license is easy to obtain on Antigua. It is generally best done in person. DO NOT mail in your payment unless told to do so, it will probably get lost. Visitor licenses are issued for

one year, they cost \$75 EC or \$30 US, and the call is held for three years then can be re-issued unless you renew it. You can choose from any available V26 or V25 call signs. You can also obtain a three-year license if you plan on returning to Antigua within that period for \$175 EC, or \$80 US. The assistant telecommunications officer for Antigua is Mr. William Henry. Their offices are on Airport Road, at the Coolidge Center. Coming from St John's on Airport Road towards the airport, it is a medium sized office building on the left, just after you pass under the red "welcome to Antigua" awning that goes across Airport Rd. The building is shared with Liat – the Liat headquarters is the right side of the building, and the government telecom offices are on the left side of the building. The entrance is at the left end of the building, and you go up the stairway to the second floor. There are signs saying telecom office. There is a security guard at the top of the stairs, tell them why you are there, and who you want to see.

Mr. Henry's phone numbers are 268-562-1868 (office) and 268-562-1872 (fax). You should call in advance to set up a time when you are sure he will be in the office to assist you. His email address is william.henry@ab.gov.ag or telecom@ab.gov.ag I suggest you email him a couple weeks before your arrival to alert him when you are coming. In some cases he is willing to print up the licenses via email before you arrive to save time. If you do it via email, you will need to scan in a photo ID and a copy of your US license, and email it to him along with a list of requested callsigns.

If Mr. Henry is unavailable, you can contact Nissa Knowles, who is one of the telecom engineers. She can assist you also. Her email is nknowles@antigua.gov.ag and here phone number is 268-562-1868 (from USA) or 468-4615 (from Antigua).

To get your license, you must go to the Telecommunications Office and see Mr. Henry or Ms. Knowles with a photo ID and a copy of your ham license. They will then give you a document (invoice) to take to the Inland Revenue office to pay for your license. (You may be able to scan these documents and email them in advance of your trip also.)

The telecom office will provide you with an invoice to pay for your license, either in person or via email. You will then need to go to the Inland Revenue Office to pay and obtain a receipt for your payment.

Inland Revenue is located on Newgate St., in downtown St John's. Newgate St. is an up street. Park where you can on Newgate St., and walk up Newgate St. until you see the police station, then cross the street. The Inland Revenue Office is on Newgate St. across the street and up a bit from the police station, in a yellow building with Shoul's Department Store letters on the top. Go to the second floor and go to the window with the sign for telecommunications licenses, pay for your license and get the receipt. Then return to the Telecommunications Office with the receipt and Mr. Henry or Ms. Knowles will give you your printed license.

Food

If you stay at a hotel, choose the all-inclusive plan, it is worth it.

If you stay at the shack, you will need to go to the grocery store and know where the good restaurants are.

There are many small markets on the island, and they are fine for beer, sodas, and snacks. If you need real groceries, you will need to go to the Epicurean, which is located in the Woods Centre Mall, outside of St. John. This is a full-service American style grocery store that has everything you could possibly need, including beer and liquor. You will need soap, toilet paper, paper towels and trash bags if you are staying at the shack.

Pizza is available from Big Banana pizza. There are two locations. The one closest to the shack is upstairs at the airport, and there is one downtown in St. Johns also. They have excellent pizza and you can order it to go. Both have other items on their menu too. If you want a pizza to take back to the shack, use the one at the airport (open 6am – 10pm) and the phone number is 268-480-6979. If you plan on eating at the restaurant, go to the one in downtown St. Johns, located near Redcliffe Quay (phone 268-480-6985) and they have a live band every Thursday night.

There is a good Chinese restaurant near the shack on the road to the airport. It has carry-out or you can eat in. It is on airport road, just before the Texaco station, on the right side of the road. It is called New Thriving Restaurant and Lounge.

There is a very nice roadside stand that has grilled local food that can be carried out back to the shack, and it is very inexpensive. Turn left on Factory Rd leaving the shack, going away from St. John's. It is a couple miles from the shack, on the left, at the intersection of Parham Rd. It is a red stand right at the corner of Factory Rd and Parham Rd. It has delicious local food like jerk pork, jerk chicken, oxtail, grilled ribs and season rice.

Two very nice restaurants in St. Johns are Hemingway's and the Commissioner Grill. Hemingway's is on St. Mary's St., and the Commissioner Grill is on Redcliffe St. We go at least once each year to the Commissioner Grill, and my favorites are the pumpkin soup and the grilled lobster. Both Hemingway's and the Commissioner Grill have excellent grilled Antillean lobster.

The Shack

If you are staying at the shack, you need to know it is not elegant. It has two beds that Roy's sister usually has made up for you with clean sheets. It has a small kitchen with a refrigerator and a propane stove. There is running water, but only cold water. The water is safe to drink, but you might want to get bottled water at the grocery store just to be sure. The refrigerator works well but you need to plug it in as soon as you arrive.

There is a small shower, again cold water only, sorry there is no hot water heater. You may need to clean the shower out a bit before you use it. You will probably need to buy soap, toilet paper, paper towels and trash bags when you visit the grocery store, as these will not be provided for you.

Roy's sister Lentene is your contact for any issues related to the house. You will pick up the keys from her, but she does work nights some times. Lentene's phone number is 268-461-7655 and her mobile is 268-782-7516. You can also make arrangements to have your cell phone activated, see the section on cell phones below. The phone number at the shack is 268-460-2828.

The entire island is wired for wifi now and there is a hotspot in Piggots Villiage, which is not too far away. We have a wifi antenna (courtesy of W1MD/V26F) that can be used to hit the island wifi in Piggots. We have a wifi box and antenna cable that we can send to you to use for a small refundable despot. You will need to purchase an ACT access card which can be obtained at the Radio Shack at Woods Mall for \$45 US for a week of access. The shack has a LAN hub and is already wired with CAT5 wire to each operating position. You can also use your cell phone as a modem to access the internet if it has that capability. If you must have internet access at the shack, please contact us well in advance so we can figure out what works best for you.

The key ring you will receive also has keys to the large rusty shed outside, and to the white shipping container behind the shed. The large rusty shed is very difficult to get in to, and you probably do not need anything that is in there. The white shipping container does have extra coax cable, some power strips, extension cords, coax jumpers, an electric drill and drill bits, and some desktop fans. Most of "our" stuff is on the right side of the shipping container, on the top shelf. Some of the stuff is well hidden. PLEASE if you take anything from the shipping container, return it where you found it when you leave! And please make sure you lock the shipping container and the shed when you leave.

There are some hand tools, soldering gun, PL259's, small rope, rotor parts, stack match spares, spare fuses and other miscellaneous supplies in the dresser drawers outside the kitchen. There is a good supply of hand tools in the metal desk drawers in the shack.

When you depart, leave your trash bags outside the shack when you leave and someone will take them away for you. You can make arrangements with her what to do with the keys when you leave.

Cell Phones

Cell phone service on the island is entirely GSM. TDMA and analog service has been discontinued. Cable and Wireless uses GSM850 (US) and there are also GSM 1800 sites for Eu. GSM phones can usually roam with their existing SIM cards, if your carrier permits it.. If desired, you can obtain a pre-paid local Antigua phone number if you have a GSM850 phone that is unlocked. Go to the Cable and Wireless office at Woods Center, and purchase a pre-paid (green) SIM card for \$18 EC, and then you can add pre-paid minutes to it at any B-mobile "top up" location. That's \$20 US for your own cell number and \$25EC airtime, what a deal! The Cable & Wireless Caribbean Cellular office that handles this is at the Woods Centre Mall, next to the Epicurean. Cable & Wireless' phone number is 268-480-2628. APUA (Antigua Public Utilities Administration) has 1900mhz and 340 PCS service available which should be compatible with European phones. Please note that satellite phones are illegal on Antigua and may be confiscated by customs.

Fire Ants!

If you see ant hills in the back yard, stay away from them! These are fire ants and have a very unpleasant and nasty bite! You may also see the occasional tarantula spider, but they are OK as long as you don't put your hand on them or step on them by mistake. There are times of the year where the mosquitoes are bad, so bring or purchase some insect repellent.

Antennas

Maintaining seven towers and all the antennas in the Caribbean environment is a constant challenge. We fix everything once a year, before CQWW SSB in October. Sometimes everything lasts all year, sometimes it breaks or gets hit by lightning as fast as we can fix it. After October, the station is on it's own until next year. You need to understand if you rent the station, you may need to make small repairs, and not every antenna may be working perfectly on your arrival. You should be prepared either to make tower climbs to effect small repairs, or accept that not everything may be working perfectly on your arrival. **We do expect you to call and consult with Roy or N3OC before making any major changes to the station.**

All the antennas are connected to a WX0B "six-pack" antenna switch, with the exception of the WARC and 6m antennas. The six pack has a radio A and radio B coax cable and control box. **YOU NEED TO PLUG BOTH CONTROL BOX POWER SUPPLIES IN** for the switch box to work correctly. One control box, and all the stack match boxes, are powered by the Kenwood power supply on the table. The other six-pack control box is powered by a small 12v switching power supply. It will **NOT** work correctly unless both boxes have power!

If you are going to use the station for multiop, you will find that most of the stack match boxes and rotor control boxes have extra cable coiled up behind them. You can extend the boxes to the other side of the room if you need to, and route the cable over the door. You will need to disconnect any stack match box you move from the 12 volt power supply and connect them to another 12 volt power supply where you have moved the box to. If you are just a single-op, there is no need to move the boxes. The ones to extend are the 40m and 15m. Move those to the B operating position.

The shortwave broadcast station near the site is now QRT so filters may not be needed any more. You may wish to bring your own filters just in case, especially WARC band filters. Note that some of the ICE filters were missing or defective in October 2007 so if you need filters, please plan on bringing your own.

One beverage coax for the Eu beverage is also permanently installed and buried along with the 20m feed line and replacement stackmatch cable. There are a couple beverages wound up (yellow wire) that you can put out if you want. The buried beverage coax terminates at the base of the 20m tower. There are also two spare beverage transformers in the dresser drawers.

If you need more than this, plan on bringing it. The beverages usually get destroyed by the cows sometime after we set them up in October, and there is no way to tell how long they will last. There is more wire in the white shipping container if you desire to repair them. There is also butt splices and a crimp tool in the entertainment center.

10 Meters

We have a 5/5/5 stack on 10 meters. V26B is the best 10 meter station in the Caribbean. The top antenna is rotatable, the middle antenna is fixed on Europe, and the lower antenna is fixed on the USA. The stack match and the bad antenna baluns were replaced in October 2009, and all 10m antennas were working at that time. **NOTE! The 10m tower is in the process of being rebuilt. At**

this time, the tower rebuild is NOT complete and one of the 10m antennas is being temporarily located to the 6m tower next to the shack until the main tower is rebuilt. So do not expect the full 10m stack to be available until further notice. We will update this web page when the rebuild is complete. I assume this also means that 160m is down also, as it was mounted on the 10m tower.

15 Meters

We have a 5/5 stack on 15 meters. The top antenna is rotatable, and the lower antenna is fixed on Europe. Avoid the temptation to move the lower antenna because its elements will hit the guy wires if you try to move it. The bent and broken antenna elements were repaired in October 2009 so everything should be working fine on 15m.

20 Meters

We have a 3/3 stack on 20 meters. The top antenna is rotatable, and the lower antenna is fixed on Europe. The top antenna was repaired in October 2009, and 20m was working 100%. However, there has been a recent report that someone cut the feedline to the 20m tower (again) when digging, and in November 2009 the 20m tower had to be run on an emergency temporary coax feed. Roy is supposed to be repairing this, and I have no idea what the current status of this is.

40 Meters

We have a 2/2 shorty-forty stack on 40 meters. The top antenna is rotatable, and the lower antenna is fixed on the USA. Remember you can operate on any frequency on Antigua, you can use 7000-7300 and you can use SSB below 7100. On SSB contests you need to transmit low (7040-7100) to work Europe, and listen up (7150-7300) to work USA. You can also transmit 7150-7300 to work USA, but they will not expect you to do that and probably will not find you. If you have to work SSB below 7040, that is OK too, but the Europeans do not like that, but if you have to, do it.

The bottom antenna has been repaired in October 2007 and is working great!

We suffered a direct lightning strike some time after October 2007, and in October 2008 the 40m system was entirely rebuilt and is working great.

The indoor stack match box was replaced in October 2009, and 40m is reported to be working 100%.

80 Meters

We have two fixed wire beams for 80 meters. The first is a 3-element pointed towards Europe, hung between the 15m and 20m towers. To change the antenna from SSB to CW, you will find two extension links on each end of the driven element. Do not cut the link off, just wind it back on the wire to shorten it and take it up. You can lower one end of the driven element by untying the green 3/8" rope at the base of the 10m tower.

For the USA there is a 2-element wire beam hung between the 15m and 40m tower. This beam has removable extensions for both the driven element and reflector element, and the extensions are color-coded with tape. There is a small nut and bolt to attach the extensions with. Drop each end down, and unhook the extension for SSB, or attach it for CW. You can leave the extension on the rope, just disconnect it. There are a total of 4 extensions, one at each end of each element..

To switch between the Eu and USA 80m antennas, you will find a two position antenna switch hanging on the wall of the shack. Put the six-pack antenna switch on 80m, and use the two position switch to change between Eu and USA. (NOTE – the second and third position on the 80m coax switch is bad. The WARC antenna coax is located next to this switch. To use the WARC antenna, connect it to the 1st or 4th position on the 80m antenna switch, and set the six pack to the 80m position. PLEASE put the 80m antenna back when you are done with the WARC antenna.

The Eu 80m antenna was replaced in October 2009 and is working fine. The USA 80m antenna is also working fine.

160 Meters

We have an inverted-vee at the top of the 10 meter tower for 160m. Sometimes, the far end of this antenna behind the 40m tower gets moved by the concrete people so they can get their trunks in and out. If the SWR seems bad on 160m, the first thing to check is the end of the antenna behind the 40m tower, it should be tied to some small trees and if has been untied that is probably your problem. In October 2009, not only did they take that side of the element down, but they cut it, so we had to splice a piece back on and tie it back up. We tried to tie it up high enough that they would not cut it again. **See the note above about the 10m tower. While the 10m tower is in the process of being rebuilt, there may not be a 160m antenna available!**

Beverages

The field behind the shack was cleared in October 2007. In October 2007, US and Eu beverages were again just laid out over the brush at about two feet off the ground. They worked very well this way, but may not last as there are goats in the vicinity. One coax run for the beverage has been permanently installed to the base of the 20m tower for the beverage. We had two coax runs, but guess what, some one cut the second one. Roy is currently working on installing some permanent beverage posts.

WARC bands

We have an A3S WARC-band tribander on another tower for 12, 17 & 30 meters. The coax to the WARC antenna located near the 80m antenna switch and is marked. To use the WARC antenna, put the six-pack antenna switch on the 80m position, and put the 80m antenna switch on the fourth (WARC) position. The antenna has some issues but works OK and is scheduled for repair in October 2010. It should be usable as is though. The rotator was fixed in October 2009.

6 Meters

There is a small 6 meter yagi on the tower next to the shack. Unfortunately the rotor is out for repair at this time, so you have to climb the tower and rotate the antenna manually if you want to use it. The antenna itself works fine, and the coax is marked inside the shack.

Spare Rotator

At this time there is one spare Ham-IV rotators at the shack. There is a small supply of spare rotator parts and manuals in the dresser drawers outside of the kitchen.

Rotator Color Codes

If you mess with the rotators, be advised there are two color codes in use. 10 Meters uses the color code shown in the hi-gain manual (the standard rotator color code). The rest of the antennas use a different color code, somewhat based on the resistor color code. There is a chart of the color codes on the inside door of the shack.

Important Phone Numbers

Lentene Carty (Roy's sister)	268-461-7655 (home) 268-782-7516
Roy Carty V21N/W4 (station owner, in Miami)	954-801-6061 (cell) 954-894-7602 (home)
Alan Scholl V21BF (local ham)	268-464-1350 (cell) 268-461-1180 (home)
William Henry (telecommunications officer)	268-562-1868 (office) 268-562-1872 (fax)