



V26B Station Information Last Updated 9/17/2014

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.

As you may know, the station burned to the ground in November 2012. As of October 2013, the reconstruction of the new station is complete. This document is now updated to reflect this, and the changes in improvements in the new V26B!

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 Gunthrope".

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) as your luggage is not considered merchandise. 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 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. He will know to go through the green line. 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 custom's 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. **USE THE SKYCAP!**

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, but may be subject to ABST (sales tax). 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.

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

Local Transportation

The car rental booth is across from the American Airlines ticket counter, outside the customs area. 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 visitor's drivers license which the car rental agency will provide to you at the time of the rental for \$20 US. I use Avis car rental which can be booked online on their web site. You can also just go to the booth and get one without a booking, or you can rent one at most hotels.

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 2.7 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 or by email. DO NOT mail in your payment unless told to do so, it will probably get lost. Visitor licenses are issued for one or three years, they cost \$81 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 \$189 EC, or \$70 US. Renewals are \$10 less.

The telecommunications officer for Antigua is Mr. Clement Samuel. 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 just left of the Liat entrance on the right side of the front of the building, under the green awning.. There are signs saying telecom office. There is a security guard, tell them why you are there, and who you want to see.

Contact Mr. William Henry (assistant Telecom Officer) to get your license. It is usually not necessary to contact the telecom officer directly. His email is william.henry@ab.gov.ag The main number to the telecom office is 268-468-4610 or 268-562-1868 (international). We were assisted in 2012 by Mr. Rolston James rolston.james@antigua.gov.ag

Mr. Samuel's phone numbers are 268-562-1868 (office) and 268-562-1872 (fax). Try to contact Mr. Henry first, and only try Mr. Samuel if you do not get a response from Mr. Henry. You should call or email in advance to set up a time when you are sure he will be in the office to assist you. His email address is clement.samuel@ab.gov.ag or telecom@ab.gov.ag I suggest you email a couple weeks before your arrival to alert them when you are coming. In some cases they are 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 those and the license application to them along with a list of requested callsigns. The license application is available on the V26B web site.

To get your license, you must go to the Telecommunications Office and see Mr. Henry or Mr. James with a photo ID and a copy of your ham license (unless you have emailed them first and they have emailed you the invoice). 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, and you can make those arrangements via email and save yourself an extra trip.

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 has moved, and is now located in Woods Centre mall, just outside of St Johns. They now are computerized and accept cash or credit card. Go there and go to one of the main cashier windows, pay for your license and get the receipt. Then return to the Telecommunications Office with the receipt and Mr. Henry or Mr. James 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 on the right just past 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 gas station at Old Parham Rd, 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. (This seemed to be closed down in 2011 & 2012 except for weekends.)

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

There are also a number of excellent restaurants in English Harbor (Falmouth) that are somewhat seasonal, and most open back up on November 1st.

The Shack

If you are staying at the shack, you need to know it is not elegant. It has one bed that Roy's sister usually has made up for you with clean sheets. It has a small kitchen with a refrigerator, microwave and a two-burner hotplate. 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 may not be provided for you. There is a main water shutoff valve on the outside of the shack you will need to turn on when you arrive. Please turn it off when you leave. The power will be turned off at the AC mains inside the shack, please also turn that off when you leave.

Roy's sister Lentine Carty is your contact for any issues related to the house. You will pick up the keys from her, and her phone numbers are 268-461-7655 (home) 268-782-7516. You can also make arrangements to have your cell phone activated, see the section on cell phones below.

The shack now has wifi, via a wimax box in the main house. There is a buried cat5 cable connecting the router in the shack to the main hose. In addition the shack has a wimax box but it has to be activated in advance, so our current plan is to share the internet from the main house. Please give them \$20 if you use their internet. Let N3OC know you want to use it and he will email them to make sure the shack is plugged in. The ssid for the wifi is v26b-shack and passphrase is "v26b-wadadli". This information is also taped to the top of the router. Currently, there is no CAT5 wiring or lan switch in the shack so use wifi until this is complete or run your own cat5 jumper to a spare port on the back of the router. There is one CAT5 cable wound up near the router you can run across the floor if you prefer not to use the wifi. There is also a magic jack plugged into the router and the number is 954-381-0141. It is a free call to the states with the magic jack.

The key ring you will receive also has keys to the grey rusty shed outside (the old "cement" shed). There is some hard line and antenna parts stored there, but not too much of interest to you. The generator battery is stored under the kitchen counter so if you need the generator, you will need to take the battery and connect it to the generator. More on the generator later.

There are some hand tools, soldering gun, PL259's, small rope, rotor parts, stack match spares, spare fuses and other miscellaneous supplies in plastic parts organizer boxes in our locking storage cabinet. There is a good supply of hand tools in the blue tool bag. There is an IC-751A, two Dentron amps, Heil headset, footswitch, 12v power supplies and various other station accessories locked up in the storage cabinet. Please put away anything you take out of that cabinet when you are done and lock it back up when you leave.

When you depart, leave your trash bags outside the shack when you leave and someone will take them away for you. There is a blue plastic barrel outside you can put your trash in.

Generator

The shack has a large diesel generator for backup power located in the generator shed in the back yard. It is locked and the key is on a wire tie hanging on the transfer switch inside the shack. You will need to install the battery when you arrive, and remove it when you leave.

Currently the generator is manual start only. If the power fails, go out to the generator shed and move the switch to run and the generator will start. Then go back inside the shack and move the manual transfer switch from line to generator.

When commercial power is on, the green light will be illuminated on the transfer switch. When the generator is on, the red light will be illuminated. If you switch to generator, you will know commercial power is back on when the green light comes back on. That will be your cue to transfer back to commercial power and shut down the generator.

We are working on setting up a remote start switch in the shack so you don't have to go outside to start the generator but this is not done yet.

There is a black plastic can in the generator shed with diesel in it. The generator has its own built in tank underneath it. If you use a lot of fuel, please refill the diesel can.

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. 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.

2011 note – for the first time, my CDMA (Verizon) phone worked on the island, and was roaming. This is very new and I am not sure who the carrier is and what the roaming rates are.

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.

Hairy Crazy Ants

New in 2011 was the arrival of the hairy crazy ant in Antigua. They are pretty harmless, and run around very fast in circles seeming to go nowhere. This is a problem as there is a major infestation on the island. They are working on how to control this new invasive pest. You will likely see lots of them. They were gone as quickly as they appeared in 2012, replaced by hordes of roaches, which have been exterminated. Right now, the place seems to be pretty much bug-free in 2014.

Tarantulas

You will occasionally see a tarantula, sometime in the shack. Try to use the broom to get it outside. They do bite, but are not poisonous, and will only bite when provoked. If you have to, just swat it with the broom to kill it.

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, and/or accept that not everything may be working perfectly on your arrival. We do expect you to call and consult with Roy or Brian N3OC before making any major changes to the station!!!**

All the antennas are connected to a WX0B "eight-pack" antenna switch, with the exception of the 6m antenna and the 40m backup antennas. The eight pack has a radio A and radio B coax cable and control box. One control box, and all the stack match boxes, are powered by a small 12VDC power supply on the table. The same power supply powers both sides of the antenna switch (station 1 and station 2). Currently, the switch is set up as follows:

- | | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | - | 160m |
| 2 | - | 80m Eu |
| 3 | - | 80m USA |
| 4 | - | 40m stack |
| 5 | - | 20m stack |
| 6 | - | 15m stack |
| 7 | - | 10m stack |
| 8 | - | WARC |

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. 40m, 15m and 10m have long enough wires to extend to the other side.

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.

The beverage cable was lost in the fire, so the current plan is a removable beverage fed with 200' of RG-8X that you will need to unwind to use it, and wind it back up when you are done and store it in the shack.

6 Meters

6 meters is a small MFJ yagi on the 10m tower. Its coax comes down inside the shack and is marked and currently only reaches the B radio position. Usually the band has several good sporadic E openings to the USA and Europe in late May, June and all of July. Other than that, it is usually dead.

10 Meters

We have a 4/4/4 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 (NNE, it is not quite on Eu as it should be), and the lower antenna is fixed on the USA. The 10m stack was moved to the "shack tower" in 2011 and is working very well. We had 3700 QSOs on 10m during the 2011 CQWW SSB, and 3900 in 2012. The stack was moved because the old 10m "white tower" was not in good condition.

NOTE! The old (white) 10m tower is not in good condition and be very careful if you climb it. Do not climb it above the spots where the legs are rusted through.

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 15m stack was overhauled in September 2014 and is working perfectly.

20 Meters

We have a 3/3 stack on 20 meters. The top antenna is rotatable, and the lower antenna is fixed on Europe. Some repairs were made in November 2011 and this band should be working 100%. If you have problems with 20m, check the connection near the base of the tower where the coax connects to the hard line, and check the connections to the stack match box on the tower for corrosion. 20m worked great in 2013.

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 40m stack worked well in 2013. The SWR was a hair high (1.8:1) but it performed quite well. On occasion the top antenna develops a problem and if you hit it briefly with high power, it will correct itself. We will overhaul the 40m stack on our 2015 work trip. It should be usable as it is, or you can use the backup antennas (wire beams).

There are some additional 40m wire yagis vertical available in case the main antennas are not working correctly. There is one pointed to the USA and one pointed towards Europe. These are on a separate coax cable and they are marked. Just connect them to the eight pack switch in place of the 40m stack if you need to use them.

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. It usually resonates around 3600 so there is probably not any reason to bother changing it back and forth.

For the USA there is a 3-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..

The Eu 80m antenna was repaired in October 2010 and is working fine, and resonates at about 3600. The USA 80m antenna was completely rebuilt in 2014 and resonates at about 3650.

160 Meters

We have an inverted-vee at the top of the old 10 meter (white) tower for 160m. Sometimes, the far end of this antenna behind the 40m tower gets lowered or the rope breaks so 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 at the edge of the property near the old sugar factory and if has been untied that is probably your problem.

Beverages

The field behind the shack was cleared in September 2014. There are two 100' sections of RG-8X cable to roll out across the yard to feed the beverage, as well as a transformer and termination resistor. There should also be a couple spools of wire. We usually just lay it along the trees and wire tie it up or even lay it on the grass.

In 2012, the beverage was put up and worked fine. In 2013 it did not work so good, and we are not sure why. It may have been the conditions in 2013.

Be prepared to bring your own beverage wire, transformer, termination and preamp if you need a beverage. All we can guarantee is that there will probably be 200' of RG-8X available to hook it up with.

WARC bands

We have an A3S WARC-band tribander on another tower for 12, 17 & 30 meters. The coax to the WARC antenna on position 8 of the eight pack switch. The antenna was repaired by Roy and is working fine.

Spare Rotator

At this time there are two spare tail twisters at the shack. The spare HAM-IV is out for repair. There are currently no spare control boxes, so if you need a spare use the WARC box.

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 hy-gain manual (the standard rotator color code). The rest of the antennas use a different color code, somewhat based on the resistor color code.

Important Phone Numbers

Anderson Carty (Roy's nephew)	268-721-1135
Lentine 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)
Shack Magic Jack	954-
Telecommunications Office	268-562-1868 (office) 268-562-1872 (fax)
Brian McGinness N3OC	301-924-1712 X1 or n3oc@wirelessinc.com