

NORFOLK AND NORWICH - EL VIEJO FRIENDSHIP LINK

Why El Viejo?

The municipality of El Viejo is in the most north-westerly point of Nicaragua in the province of Chinandega. It is the largest municipality in the country at 1038 sq. km. It was selected because the city of El Viejo is, like Norwich, an historic city. The name itself literally means 'The Old One'. It was founded within 20 years of Columbus' arrival in the Americas. It is also, again like Norwich, the centre of an agricultural area. Like Norfolk it is also has the sea on three sides. There, however, the similarities end. The climate is sub-tropical with average temperatures of 27°C. There are two seasons, 'winter' from late May to November, which is the rainy season, and 'summer', from December to May which is the dry season. Crops consist of maize, beans, sorghum, sesame, and very large areas of sugar cane. Some bananas are also grown but this industry has diminished due to reduction in world prices. Fishing and shrimp farming take place on the coast.



A number of people from Norwich have visited El Viejo and, in the early years, one of our members taught English at the University in Leon for several years and facilitated contacts with people in El Viejo. An ambitious activity in the early years was a visit by a school football team from El Viejo which took part in a youth competition for the 'Canary Cup'. Some of the young people who took part in that competition still recall it with pleasure.

Various projects have been promoted and funded by the Link since 1986 and these are listed below. They vary from small projects geared to revolving loans to assist small co-operatives to very large schemes such as assisting in the construction of a new settlement to provide houses for 42 families who lost their homes during hurricane Mitch in November, 1998. The families decided to name the settlement 'Norwich' in recognition of the \$US20,000 which was raised by the Link. Financial and material support has also been given to schools and health centres from time to time.

in 1995 contact with the Mayor and the El Viejo Municipal Council was resumed and the then Mayor, Sr. Antonio Narciso Castillo, visited Norwich in 1997. His successor, Sr. Alcides Moradel, also had a very successful visit to Norwich in 2002.