

TarValon.Net 2005 Annual Report



TarValon.net Annual Report 2005

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1. State of the Tower

Eleyan al'Landerin

Amyrlin Seat

Our Fifth Anniversary has come and gone with fantastic fanfare and much celebration. Having crossed that hurdle, we now look to our next 5 years as an internet presence and community. We've come farther in this half decade than any of us originally anticipated, and this makes planning for the future particularly challenging. Our growth and the growth of WoT fandom at large continually changes our playing field, and we will need to continue innovating and adapting in order to stay at the top of our game.

One clear example of how our growth keeps effecting us directly is our continued search for an acceptable server solution. Incredible use of our message boards and other features have had our database queries quickly become too much for our hosting providers, and we have switched providers no less than twice in the last 12 months, and another switch in the near future looks inevitable. We have, however, had a wonderful infusion of new talent into our IT department which, with our more established IT persons, are coming up with innovative and far-reaching solutions for this and other issues. It has been awhile since we've been able to fundamentally work on the bones and features of our website, and I anticipate that this next year will see us developing our site, further enabling it as both a place of entertainment and an organizational tool for running our community.

Growth has also effected many of our standing policies and procedures regarding our membership. The Hall and Council ended up taking the last leap and are now overseeing and approving raisings in membership for all levels in a process that I feel is both more effective and more fair given the numbers we now see.

Growth is also apparent in the rapid expansion of our real life functions. While this has always been an important and defining part of our organization, the demand for real life gatherings, meetings and events by our members has exploded. Nearly every weekend minor get togethers are planned by members for those in their local area. We have, by necessity, increased our annual European functions to two and have appointed a second Mistress of Revels for that side of the Atlantic. Attendance at our Anniversary trumped our hopes to reach 80 persons with an attendance of 114. Because of this changing face, we will be reassessing how our parties are structured and timed this year, most likely adjusting them so more members can take advantage of them, so that they do not overlap on their needs of resources too badly, and so that they fall during favorable travel periods.

Along these lines, I am pleased to make a preliminary announcement that TarValon.Net, in conjunction with other prominent WoT sites, will be attempting to create a multi-site conference named "WoT*Con" within the next 2 years. It has always been a long term goal of this site and community to eventually take our real life functions and use them to create bridges and celebrate our fandom with other fan groups. We are excited as we initially thought this was a goal we would accomplish near year 10. Given the success of our events,

and our experience with them, we are confident that we will be able to accomplish this much sooner. It is so incredible to be in a position, not only in membership but also financially, in our experience, and in our status, to be able to go forward with this long-term goal. We are not certain if this event will supplement or take the place of one of our North American events; I expect this will be discussed and decided on over our summer Admin meeting. More information on this, and how you can become involved, will be available over the next year.

This year has been good to us, financially. Despite our "promise" that we would hold twice annual fundraisers whether we needed them or not, we did not hold a single money drive in 2005. None of our events were planned for profit, but because attendance was almost always higher than initially budgeted for, we managed to make a marginal profit on a few of them (with those funds going straight in to cover our operational costs). However, with increased server needs, our increase in event needs (which often necessitate many deposits being paid, and often overlap), and the potential for underwriting a multi-community event in the near future, it is important for us to have a higher bank balance, enabling us to keep all of our bases covered. Our financial report will detail what our goals for the coming year will be.

Another significant change occurred in the past month. My Keeper of the Chronicles of nearly 4 years, Elyna Sedai, retired from her position. She was instrumental in helping us become what we are today, and I am grateful to have had her work with me for so very long. Her successor, Dralyn Sedai, brings a new energy and enthusiasm to her position. A new person in such a role will always bring some changes with her, but I am certain that the changes Dralyn brings are going to be a much-needed shot in the arm. I hope I am as lucky with her as I was with Elyna and will have her with me for a good long time.

We have spent the last two years solidifying our place as we approached 5 years. This year, I hope to focus on more innovation. I want to look at where we are, figure out what we can do better, and adapt not only to fit but also fill the place we hold. I want to use this time to dream a little bigger and to think about what we can do for each other and what we can do for the community at large. We have shown we have the talent, ability, and drive to do great things. This year, I would like for us to start fulfilling our greater potential.

2. Financial Report

Eleyan al'Landerin

Amyrlin Seat

Due to the prolonged ill health of our treasurer, financial specifics for 2005 are not yet available, but will be transferred to the Amyrlin as soon as the treasurer is able.

Our beginning balance for 2005 was \$2,377.01

Current balance in April of 2006 is \$7, 001.07

We did not have any on-site fundraisers in 2005 due to our American events generally turning unexpected, small profits.

In 2006, we do plan to hold on-site fundraisers so that members not attending events may also contribute. It is our goal to have at least a standing balance of \$10,000 in savings by the end of the year. We hope that this will facilitate us accepting more payments for events "at the door" in the future, as well as allow us to underwrite specific upcoming projects.

Several months ago, we moved our funds from a private personal account (to which both the Treasurer and the Amyrlin had access) to a sole-proprietor business account. Checks to and from TarValon.Net can now be made out specifically to TarValon.Net, and this account will allow us to add and remove signers as needed.

We hope to have a plan regarding our finances in Europe solidified by the end of this year.

3. Department of Information Technology

Karassa Souladrin
Master of the Watch

It's been an interesting year for the IT department! Due to our heavy activity, our forums account was suspended in March. We managed to convince our hosting company to bring us back online, but then we were suspended again in May. In February, we started making plans to switch hosting companies, but before we could even get things off the ground, that company realized that we were far too big for them to handle.

In May, we moved to the virtual server that we are hosted on now.

Unfortunately, it wasn't until late in the year that we realized that the statistics tracking module on our virtual server wasn't working properly, so we don't have any stats for you this year on bandwidth and the like.

Melana Sedai worked extremely hard to change the code on our main site when our host for that portion of our web presence just flat went out of business. Our new host did not support the type of database we had been using previously, so many things had to be re-written. Melana worked tirelessly though, and the changeover was **flawless**!

Also, in April of 2005, we got a new IRC Director! Yenie Sedai was put in charge of Tar Valon's three chat rooms, #wheel, #oldewarderandhen and #wanderingwoman. In August, Yenie chose Sela Sedai to be her assistant. The two of them have worked hard to make our chat rooms lively places with much activity! There are radio shows and games therein, and the list of channel operators has been overhauled to make sure there is always an op present. Sela went over the commands of our bot, TDO, organized them all, and deleted commands that were outdated.

In October, we arranged for many of the groups within the tower to have FTP access to their own spot on our server, as well as database access. This involved creating users and permissions for each group, and setting up and installing an application to make database access and manipulation easy, and accessible from the web browser, since users don't have direct access to the server. Groups that received accounts of this nature include all the companies and ajahs, the Tar Valon Times, Tar Valon Radio, and the Museum; the forums themselves were moved to their own folder. We continue our efforts to get our entire web presence consolidated onto one server.

2006 looks to be an exciting year as our community continues to grow and change.

4. Department of Membership

Val a'Shain
Master-at-Arms

4.1. City Membership

In the first full year of the city of Tar Valon, we have received on average three applications a day. In all, 1,204 applications are on record. This number is after cleaning out the double applications and the people who don't make any attempt to fill out a serious application. A comparison with 2004 is not really useful, records in the possession of the Master-at-Arms only go back till October. From 2004 a total of 270 applications are on record, indicating that the number of applications received is more or less constant. The first month of 2006 doesn't show much change either.

It is not possible to know exactly how many of the people who apply create an account on the boards. There are several difficulties in finding out. Some people don't use the name they use on their application (but for instance an AIM or Yahoo handle). Others do create an account but never fill out an application. During 2005, a number of accounts were probably created by bots as well. The administration deleted unused accounts on several occasions.

4.2. Tower Membership

Although the number of citizen applications doesn't seem to change much, the number of people moving from the city to the Tower does. The number has risen from a reported 99 in 2004 to 137 in 2005.

Novice/Recruit applications are still less predictable than citizen applications, but the process has become more streamlined in the last year. There have also been less technical problems. All this resulted in a steadier influx of people into the tower in 2005. Figure 1 shows the numbers of new novices and recruits.

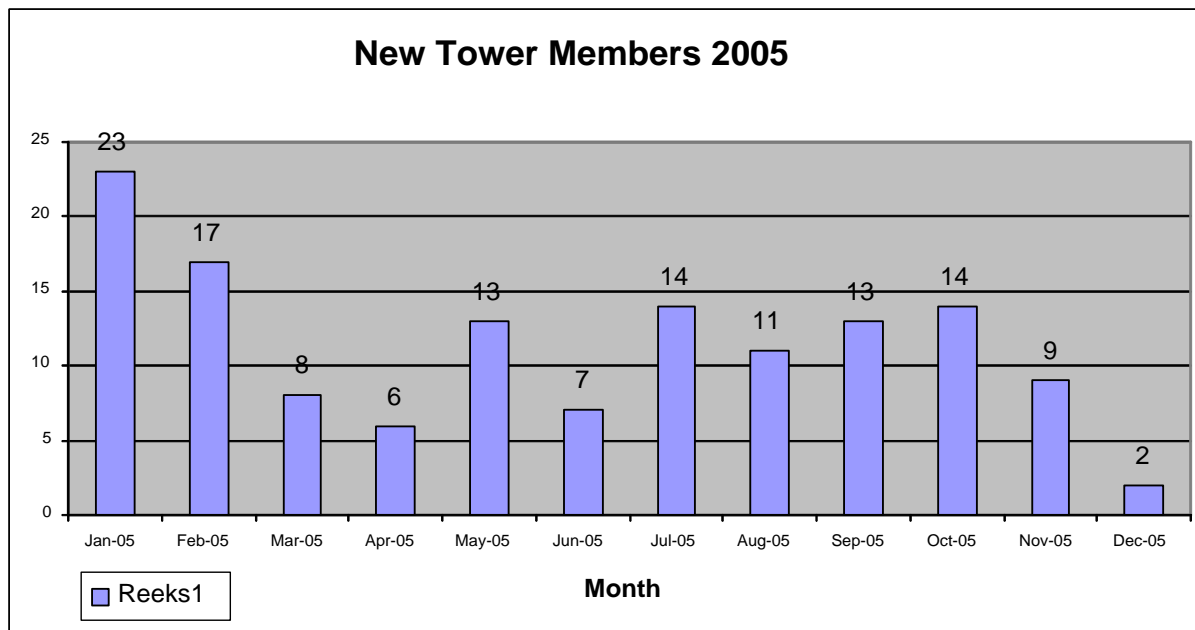


Figure 1: New Tower Members in 2005

Due to some changes in the procedure for resigning and the fact we didn't do any major clean ups in 2005, the number of officially retired members was limited to 5.

4.3. Rank

In 2005, Tower membership has grown quite a lot. Growth is seen in all ranks, especially the number of Recruits and Soldiers, which has more than doubled in 2005. Tower membership divided by rank is shown in table A.

Rank	April 1 st 2003	April 1 st 2004	January 1 st 2005	January 1 st 2006
Novice	81	37	44	68
Recruit	40	21	22	47
Accepted	20	36	48	71
Soldier	21	17	14	35
Aes Sedai	65	90	104	142
Youngling	10	14	16	22
Warder	27	40	45	47
Total	264	255	293	432

Table A: Rank of Tower members. The discrepancy between the number of people joining and leaving and the difference between the totals for 2005 and 2006 is caused by a few of our members returning after long periods of absence.

The ratio of women and men in the Tower has shifted slightly in 2005 in favor of the men. It has dropped below 2:1 again. If we look at city applications, the number of men and women are almost equal. In figure 2, Tower membership divided by rank is shown in a circle graph.

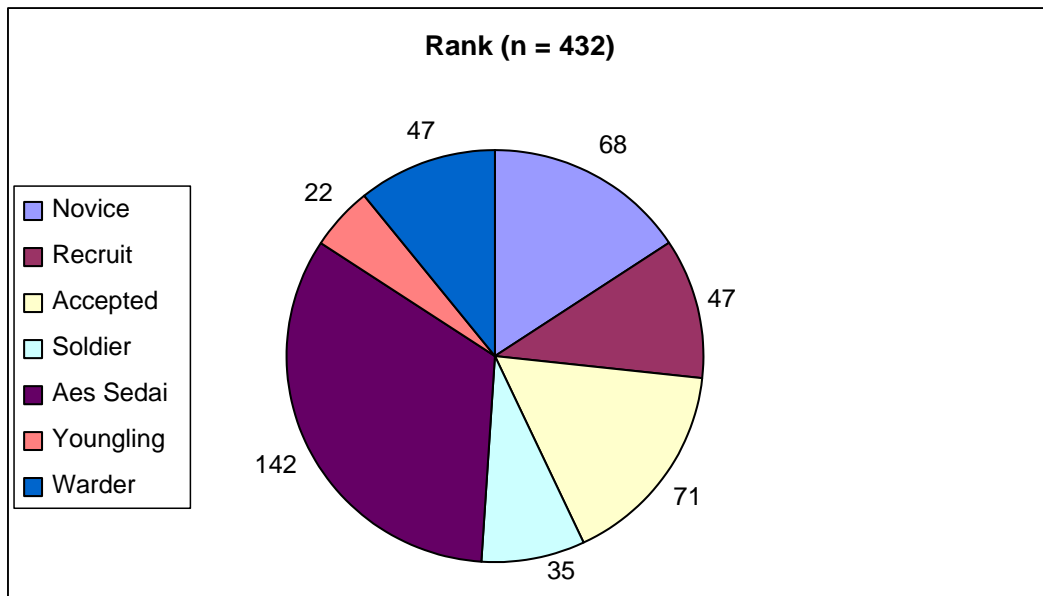


Figure 2: Tower membership by rank.

4.4. Ajah and Company Membership

The fourth company is probably the biggest change in this section. Madhi'in d'ma Dieb started accepting members in January 2005, initially with 6 people, 2 from each of the other companies. After almost a year, MDD is a well established company with 14 members. As can be expected from the overall growth in tower membership all ajahs and companies have increased their membership over the past year.

Ajah	April 1 st 2003	April 1 st 2004	January 1 st 2005	January 1 st 2006
Blue	13	24	31	39
Brown	19	21	20	27
Gray	7	15	16	26
Green	16	25	28	37
Red	11	8	14	21
Yellow	9	17	18	28
White	11	17	23	30
Total	86	127	150	208
Company				
Dai M'Hael	22	26	27	34
Mahdi'in d'ma Dieb	0	0	0	14
San D'Ma Shadar	11	19	23	24
Val'Cueran	22	23	21	28
Total	55	68	71	100

Table B: Ajah and Company membership.

In figures 3 and 4, the relative sizes as well as the composition of each ajah and company is shown.

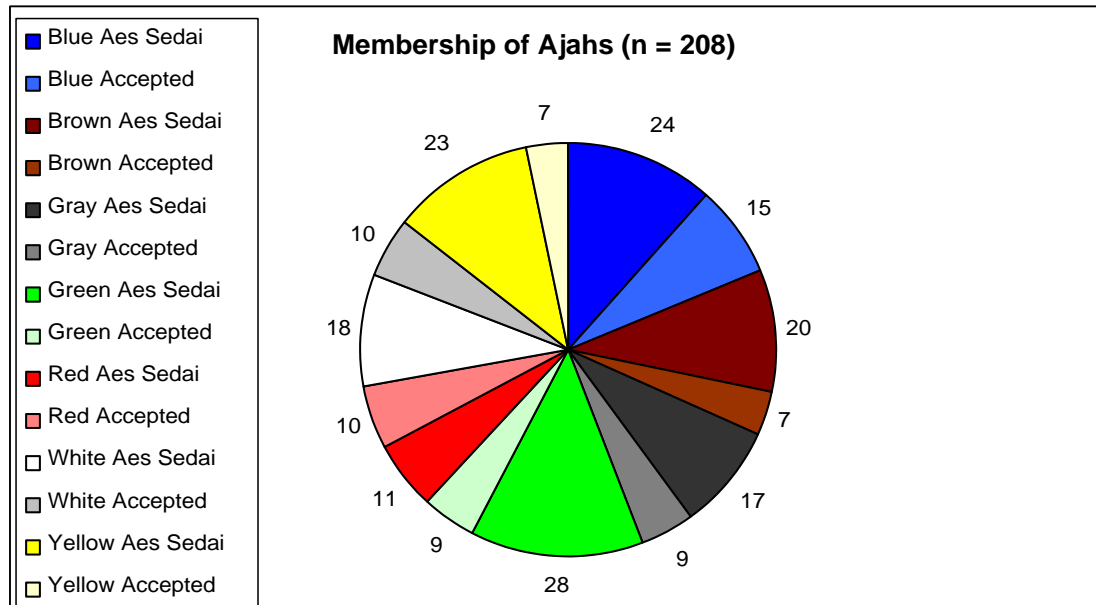


Figure 3: Size and composition of the ajahs January 1st 2006.

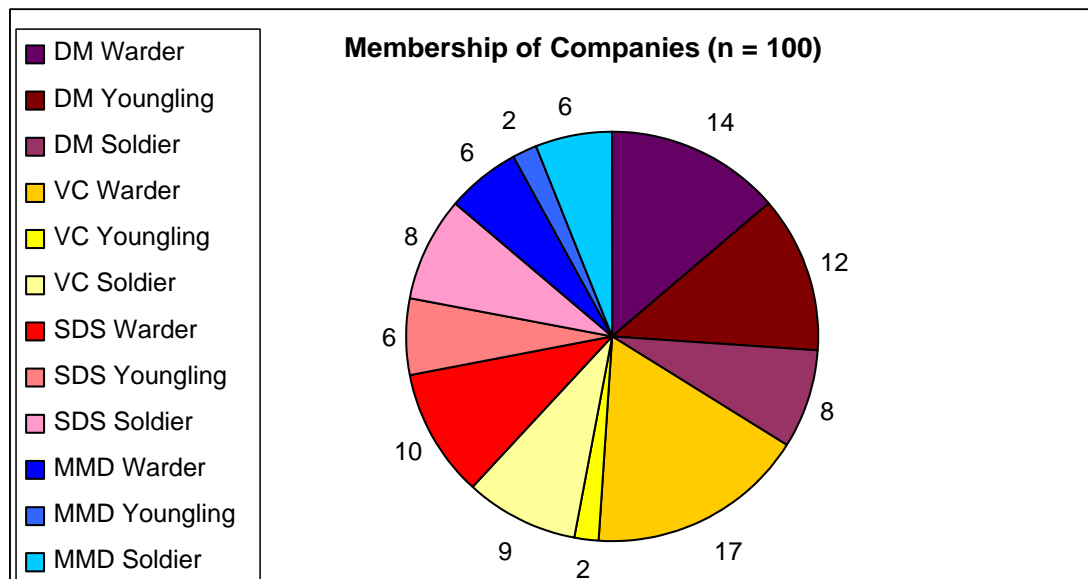


Figure 4: Size and composition of the companies January 1st 2006.

4.5. Location

The location graph (figure 5) shows little difference compared to last year. Roughly 2/3 of our membership is concentrated in the U.S.; the rest is mostly located in north-west Europe and Australia. Worth noting, but not directly obvious from the graph, is that the category other includes more countries than it did before. Also interesting to see is that we are

attracting more people from Germany and Finland, currently the largest contributors to the category other.

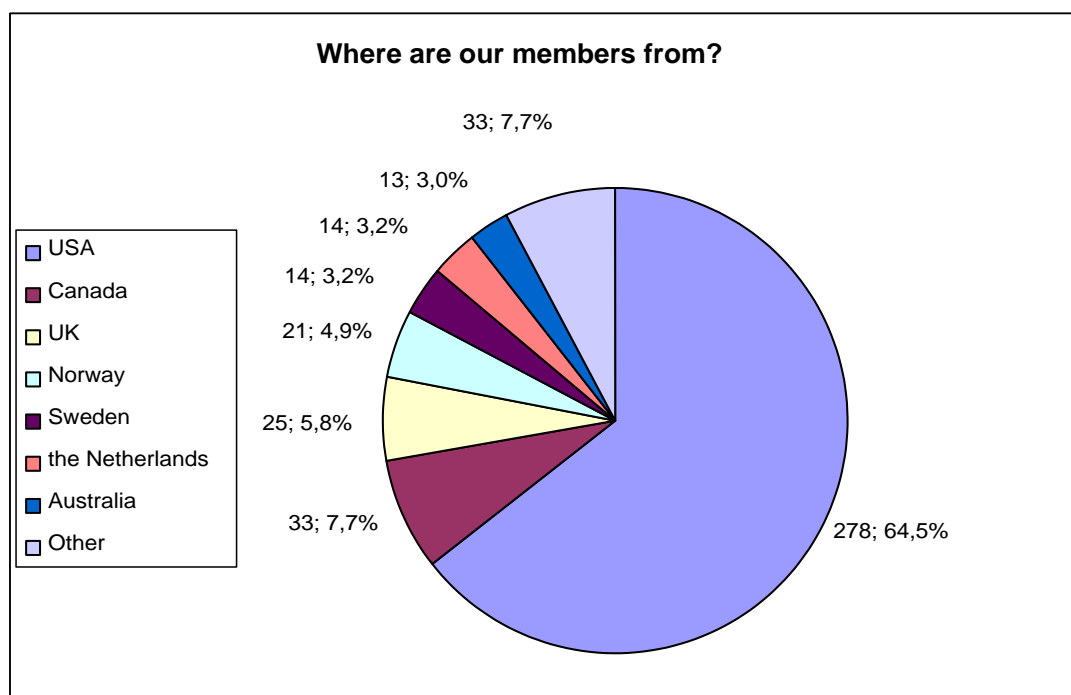


Figure 5: Location of the Tower members on January 1st 2006.

Other nations in the graph include: Germany, Finland, South Africa, Ireland, Belgium, Italy, India, New Zealand, U.A.E., Portugal, Spain, Israel, Bulgaria, Slovakia, Serbia, Malaysia and France. The share of people from countries where English is not an official language is fairly constant, about 17%.

Table C shows where we are best represented per capita (countries with less than 10 members not included).

Country	Members	Population	One member on x inhabitants
Norway	21	4.593.041	218.716
Sweden	14	9.001.774	642.984
Canada	33	32.805.041	994.092
USA	278	295.734.134	1.063.792
the Netherlands	14	16.407.491	1.171.964
Australia	13	20.090.437	1.545.418
UK	25	60.441.457	2.417.658

Table C: members per capita. Source population number CIA world factbook

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>

The USA overtook the Netherlands in 2005, other than that the overall picture has changed little.

4.6. Age

With the increasing size of our membership, the age range of our members seems to have increased a bit. The minimum age requirement is still 14, so no members born after 1991 are allowed (save Odin, born in 2000). Figure 6 shows the year of birth of our members.

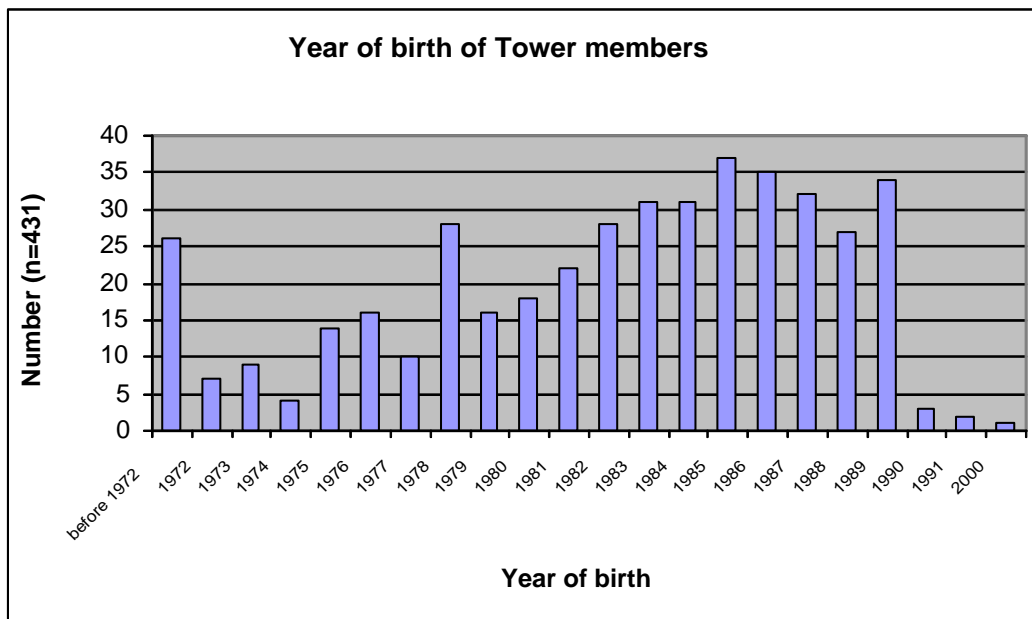


Figure 6: Birth year of Tower members.

The bulk of our membership was born between 1978 and 1989 with the average still somewhere in 1982. The date of birth of one of our returning members is not exactly known, explaining why there are only 431 people in figure 6.

4.7. Looking ahead

Two major changes are coming up for the membership department. First is the change in leadership. After more than 4 years of service to the Tower, the Keeper of the Chronicles, Elyna al'Tzoran, has decided to step down. Her successor, Dralyn Montsier, is currently being trained. Although no drastic changes in the way the department is organized are being considered, this change will not go unnoticed. The Membership department is grateful for Elyna's service and wishes Dralyn the best in taking on this new challenge.

The second change of the membership department is the imminent start of a long anticipated project, guilds in the city of Tar Valon. It has been a wish of the tower administration to

expand the city in this direction since the city's conception. The guild leaders are currently being selected and the project is expected to take off soon.

In other words, 2006 will be a challenging year for the membership department. Just the way we like it.

5. Department of Membership Services

Kariada Kunai

Director of Membership services

This has been quite an exciting year for the Department of Membership Services!

We held three very successful events, in addition to our presence at Dragon*Con and Comic*Con. Our Anniversary party was in the beautiful Colorado mountains, a few hours outside of Denver. Fall Ball was held in historic Richmond, Virginia, and featured a dinner at an authentic tavern from the Colonial Williamsburg era. Europe had its annual event in Gothenburg, Sweden. Our unofficial local events are increasing in size and frequency, offering many opportunities to meet with Tower folk all over the world, all year long.

TarValon.Net was chosen as one of a select few sites to design a page for TOR's Knife of Dreams Internet Hunt. With artwork by Valorian Edores and design by Darim Pelegro, our contribution featured a scene from Mat's Healing in *The Dragon Reborn*. We were excited and honored to be recognized by TOR as one of the leading sites in the internet world of the Wheel of Time.

For TarValon.Net's annual Servant of All Competition, members from all ranks and affiliations logged community service contributions for the month of December. In one month, our members donated hundreds of hours and thousands of dollars to their communities. We also held a very special Santa Project for a member in need who lost her home and all her belongings to Hurricane Katrina. Tower members pitched in and donated over \$650 for her to buy new furniture and house goods. These two acts have shown just how giving this community is, and proves that we really are Servants of All!

With the addition of an online events team, freeweeks and holidays have taken off and now feature fun games, activities, and competitions. Our Feast of Fools celebration in late summer caused much chaos, as ajahs and companies traded affiliations, novices and recruits switches places, and citizens pranced about ordering everyone around. Feast of All Soul's Salvation and Feast of Lights, two annual events, gave members the opportunity to participate in many Ajah- and Company-sponsored games and hunts, in addition to site-wide costume competitions and other activities.

The Tower Museum has recently expanded its exhibits to include written works, along with its traditional artwork. Along with this, this museum is also sponsoring prose and poetry workshops hosted by Jalen te'Kreg. Ajah and company logos got a makeover this year by Art Curator Darim Pelegro. The new logos artistically describe each Ajah and Company individually, while keeping a flow and continuity throughout.

Tar Valon Radio now hosts seven different radio shows, with more on the way. The move to a new server has permitted more listeners, and some of our shows attract over twenty members a week! Our irc games have hit a bit of a road bump, but they are on their way to making a comeback and once again, along with Tar Valon Radio, making the Olde Warder and Hen both active and entertaining.

Looking ahead, we have a very busy and productive year coming up. For the first time ever, we have a Mistress of Revels team in Europe, dedicated to the development of European parties. Because of this, we will be hosting two parties in Europe every year, to balance the two parties we host in the US.

Everyone is looking forward to this year's Anni Party, which marks our 5th anniversary as a community. This event will be our biggest yet, with attendance exceeding 100 members and an extra day added to give us time for all of our activities. We will have games, competitions, discussion groups, karaoke, workshops, classes, awards, ceremonies, and a formal dinner and masquerade! This is our most ambitious event and is highly anticipated!

Also, look for our next Euro Party taking place this summer, and Fall Ball in Toronto, Canada.

The appointment of a Mistress of Games gives high hopes to the more playful side of TarValon.Net. She will be in charge of our irc activities and handle publicity and scheduling for Olde Warder and Hen activities. Tar Valon Radio is gaining popularity, bringing new listeners and hosts. Expect to see more shows premiering in the near future. Our online events team is already planning our next freeweek, and is preparing another fun-filled year to come. We are also looking at developing a more user-friendly and individualized calendar to provide our membership with.

It has been an absolute delight in leading this department these past two years. Last year has shown remarkable developments and progress, and I expect the same great things out of this department for the coming year as well. I would like to thank everyone in the Department of Membership Services for all their hard work and continuous dedication. They truly are behind everything that makes this site so special.

Department of Membership Services, as of February 2006:

Kariada Kunai - Department Director

Neisa Alibrylla - Assistant to the Director

Saminda Meltacia - Department Webmistress

Jenarra Tikvah - Mistress of Revels, US

Maidelyn Sedai - Mistress of Revels, Europe

Maran Damastes - Mistress of Revels, Europe

Darim Pelegro - Lead Graphic Design, Art Curator

Ehlana Taravin - Avatar Site Coordinator, Online Events Coordinator

Raevyn Tsornin - Member Resource Center Manager

Triste al'Rottoure - Mistress of Games

Micah Junfir - Tar Valon Radio Director

Ilissa al'Nari - Birthday Coordinator

Though I cannot name them all here, I would also like to recognize all the members of the online events team, all the radio and irc game hosts and staff, and everyone who works on

committees for our events. They put in an enormous amount of work and are crucial to the fulfillment of many of our department duties.

Thank you, everyone. I am grateful to all of your work, and am looking forward to another rewarding and successful year!

6. Department of Communications

Adriana al'Tere

Director of Communications

This year, the Tar Valon Times reached the goal of becoming an emailed newsletter. At first, citizens did not receive the email as they were not in a user group that allowed mass emails. This changed, however, and as of January 1, every member with an account on the boards received the TVT by email. Due to a board error, mass emails are not possible at the current time, so the TVT is posted in General.

Current staff on the TVT include al'Cary Mandoragan, Assistant Editor; Ciaran al'Trystan; Cursor Wrathwind; Dart Marouvin; Laurienne Corana; and Valadilene Aldieb.

The position of Eyes-and-Ears was created in October. The person holding this position scans other Wheel of Time sites to find news that may not reach TarValon.net or the news@tarvalon.net address.

In the coming year, I hope to update the news at least once a week, though some weeks this is not possible simply because there is no news pertaining to the Wheel of Time or Robert Jordan. The TVT will be given a "face-lift" as the staff and I find out what the members of TarValon.net would like to see in the TVT.

7. Department of Research

Atarah al'Norahn
Director of Research

The growth in the library this past year has been nothing less than exceptional. Many goals have been met, progress continues to move forward at a fast pace, and the mark of twenty five hundred articles has been reached and passed.

As far as book-related research is concerned, we have made huge advances, and the completion of both the chapter summaries and the character summaries is within sight. With nearly five hundred and fifty chapter summaries in total, less than fifty remain to be done; out of close to one thousand nine hundred character summaries, somewhere between four and five hundred remain. With the Tower Histories, a lot of progress has been made. At this point, most of the important, basic information is available in the library and the content continues to expand.

Goals for the Research part of the department over the next year are high but completely attainable. In the Histories, the Tower Historian, Ismene Gillandred, hopes to continue work on updating information, as well as creating pages about Ajah positions, such as Hearts and Honor Guards, creating pages on TarValon.Net traditions, and possibly compiling a list of unofficial Tower “clubs” and groups. For the library in general, I have hopes of completing both the chapter and character summary sections and completing the updates for Knife of Dreams. We will likely be hitting the three thousand article mark sometime late April to mid May.

There has been a bit of a change in the membership of the Research Department. Lyssandra Darai, after a very long time of service and much hard work, chose to retire from the position of Director of Research. Now filling the position of Assistant to the Director of Research, my former position, is Kyria d'Oreyn. The position of Classroom Assistant has also been brought back and added to; instead of just organizing classes, the Classroom Assistant, currently Jundna al'Daelys, now also moderates the classroom forum.

The next year looks to be very bright indeed for the Tower Library. We continue to be a leading source of Wheel of Time information and look forward to the additions to come.