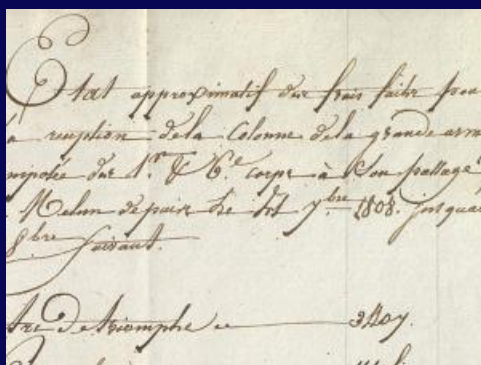


2021 THE YEAR OF NAPOLEON

THE GRANDE ARMÉE PASSING THROUGH MELUN IN SEPTEMBER 1808



Inventory of the expenses of the Town of Melun for the Grande Armée passing through the town in 1808, frad077 2r94 © CD77

On leaving and returning from campaigns, the imperial army would stop off in several towns in France where the soldiers would be welcomed and homage would be paid to them. It happened in Melun in 1808.



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Some costly celebrations

Etat approximatif des frais faits pour
la réception de la Colonne de la grande armée
Composée de 13,500 hommes à leur passage
à Melun depuis le 21^{er} Sept. 1808. jusqu'à
le 8^{er} Octobre.

No.	Les portables qui ont été en garnison à Melun pendant la nuit du 21 ^{er} Sept. à la nuit du 22 ^{er} Sept.	Ar. De triomphe	3507
		Ar. De triomphe	1106
		Sain blanc Distribué aux Armes	4550
		Sain blanc	6130
		Sain blanc	3880
		Sain blanc	890
		Maintenance	1446
		Cherbourg Ar. De triomphe	959
		Sain blanc	880
		Etat	20762

35000
2,111.09
32,111.09

La Somme de la colonne est de 13,500 hommes
ainsi que les portables de la colonne de la grande armée
par Monsieur de la Fayette de la grande armée, de puis
jusqu'à la Distribution ont été faits.
Le Maire de Melun
M. de la Fayette

Inventory of the expenses of the Town of Melun for the Grande Armée
passing through the town in 1808, frad077 2r94
©CD77

Arriving in Melun on 21st September 1808, the 13,500 men from the Grande Armée were accommodated for nearly a week in the town of Melun. The inventory of expenses made by Jean-Baptiste Charles Thierry - notary and then mayor of Melun from 1800 to 1815 - gives us information on the expenses incurred and the amount of celebrations when welcoming the Grande Armée, which was the largest army in the world at the time, to a French town.

wn. Formal tribute ceremonies, purchase of food, decorations... The list of expenses goes on...

Melun was in a festive mood for a week. The inhabitants built a - dismountable - Arc de Triomphe to pay homage to the soldiers, and they were invited to a banquet where brandy and wine were served.

Preparations were carried out by the Town along with the war commissioner. During the Empire, the war commissioner was a military or civil servant in charge of logistics, administration, accounting and military stewardship. In concrete terms, the war commissioner had to ensure the collection of contributions in enemy countries, the policing of military stages and convoys, the distribution of food, fodder for the horses, heating, clothing and equipment for the armies.

The Grande Armée passing through Melun cost 90,742 old francs, which was a fortune at the time. By way of comparison, the average wage of a construction worker working in Paris in 1815 was 3.50 francs a day, and a kilo of bread cost 32 centimes in 1831.

Sources and bibliography:

- Passage de la Grande Armée, liste des dépenses faites par la ville de Melun pour le passage de la Grande Armée en 1808 (List of expenses incurred by the town of Melun for the Grande Armée passing through the town in 1808), frad077 2R94, CD77.
- Paul Paillat, "Les salaires et la condition ouvrière en France à l'aube du machinisme (1815-1830)", ("Wages and labour conditions in France in the early days of mechanisation (1815-1830)", article published in La revue économique, 1951, pp. 767-776.