

What is a 'sac de distribution' ?

What do you do with it:

What it's not is a white bread bag slung over the shoulder the British had.

Soldats were issued with a 'sac de distribution' and it is marked in the Livret de Soldat.

The sack was made from hemp 'toile de chanvre'. There are various qualities of hemp weave, some can be very inexpensive and some very expensive, hemp being very resistant was a practical choice.

It had several purposes, the main one for holding food and rations that were distributed to a squad.

This is confirmed in the Ordonnance sur l'habillement of 1786, article 11 as well as Service de Campagne 1791 section 1 Preparations, which also confirmed it could be slept in.

It was slung over the shoulder 'en sautoir'. On either shoulder it would have been an encumbrance with backpack, giberne and musket, it surely would have been dropped when in action, as it's a hindrance to either loading the musket or getting open the giberne.

"Règlement concernant le service intérieur, la police et discipline de l'infanterie" 1792

Chaque soldat aura de plus un sac de toile qui lui servira pour aller aux distributions, et dans lequel il s'enveloppera pour coucher: ce sac se roulera après avoir été bien serré entre le corps de l'havresac et la patte extérieure qui le ferme, de façon qu'il soit recouvert par celle-ci.

Its other purpose (as people were generally shorter/ smaller than now) is a cover, sleeping bag. For a voltiguer, typically smaller than the regular fusilier or grenadier, this is a distinct possibility.

When not in use, it was supposed to be folded and put under the closing flap of the backpack. (havresac).

Dimensions:

Well it depends on what year, surprise, surprise.

1) 4 brumaire X [26 octobre 1801]:

4 foot 10 inches [157 cm] by 28 inches [76 cm].

2) Royaume d'Italie (kingdom of Italy 1807:

55 inches [148,94 cm] by 30 inches [81,24 cm]

3) Bardin of 1818 has detailed instructions and an excellent test of your French or Babelfish.

'le sac à distribution ne pourra être qu'à deux coutures, il sera en forte toile de chanvre écru de 104 millim. de largeur; il sera formé d'un morceau de 3 mètres de longueur plié et doublé dans le sens de sa largeur et cousu le long de ses bords latéraux au moyen de deux coutures rabattues; son ouverture sera ourlée; son développement, les deux coutures non comprises, sera de 1 560 millim, ce même développement, coutures non comprises ou développement apparent sera de 1 550 millim.

How to make it.

You will need twice the above quantities to make the sac. As it is made up of a 3 meter piece in length double folded back along the length and stitched up on three sides (if you do four sides you will find it difficult to put food in it and climb in at night. One end is hemmed.

Website has instructions here: http://www.nappravnik.com/workshop/doppelte_kappnaht.htm