

### 158. Scottish soldiers

Stigler, Stephen M. (1986) *The History of Statistics — The Measurement of Uncertainty before 1900*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 208.

The following data are taken from the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* (1817). The chest circumference was measured (in inches, to the nearest inch) of 5732 Scottish soldiers. Stigler recounts the interesting history of these data. The Belgian mathematician Adolphe Quetelet (1796-1874) was interested in probability and social statistics, and amongst other things in the fitting of statistical models to data. Quetelet's summary of these data found 5738 soldiers (not 5732); his total for the number of soldiers with chest measurements between  $33\frac{1}{2}$  and  $34\frac{1}{2}$  inches was 18 (not 19). Stigler writes: 'Although errors have no important bearing on the explanation [of Quetelet's method for fitting a statistical model], they do exemplify Quetelet's tendency to calculate somewhat hastily, without checking his work'.

Measurement	Frequency	Measurement	Frequency
33	3	41	935
34	19	42	646
35	81	43	313
36	189	44	168
37	409	45	50
38	753	46	18
39	1062	47	3
40	1082	48	1