

## *2. Transcribing and Interpreting*

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### **Altering a Birth, Marriage or Death Certificate is a criminal offence.**

Not just from the point of law, but a person well versed in Genealogical Research will no doubt agree that the information recorded on a Certificate, however incorrect it may be, is important to preserve.

Any inaccuracy between truth and the record is a challenge for you to try and prove. Changing the record to match your research is not a good idea.

If I were to pick out at random a primary document from someone's research files, how confident would that person be that the detail recorded in their software matches completely the copy in my hands?

I'm not just talking about, for instance, adding in the Father of a child born out of wedlock (which is left blank on the child's birth certificate) – a highly speculative amendment.

I'm also talking about more subtle changes: spellings “corrected”, for example. My surname changes through history from Moorhouse to Morehouse. At what point do I record Morehouse as Morehouse rather than Moorhouse? Answer: The first time it occurs – right or wrong, that is the way it was recorded. It saves having to go back and amend everything later.

Then there's the omissions: Does one record Everything that is mentioned on the Certificate? Informant/Witness detail? “The Mark of”? Time of Birth (if shown)? Registration date? These can be significant in certain situations.

On the software being used: Is there space to fill out all of these details? What happens when all

available space has been filled up? Whereabouts does information about a person's Death go? In the same pigeon hole as the Birth? How does one know what information was gleaned from where? How does one ensure that any subsequent research done does not alter records that have previously been entered? How does one consistently record the absence of information in a field? Sometimes this absence can be a clue.

With this way of working, there is a continuing need to refer to the original source to confirm that the original has not been inadvertently amended during a “spring-clean” of the data.

If you thought that you entered into this hobby for relaxation and not to be castigated for not doing things by the book, then let me say that there is a way to record information which ensures these things are done properly without having to worry so much about them.

Precision Genealogical Tools is a program that endeavours to separate the Transcription of records from their Interpretation. This is just a grand way of saying that you enter in data from an original certificate or source once, and this information is then left alone. Interpretation of these records is done, redone and undone separately in a way that does not disturb the primary information.

Precision Genealogical Tools provides the means to Link each person mentioned on a certificate or census record with their birth. For instance, the Deceased on a Death Certificate can be linked to their Birth. The Spouse of the deceased can be linked to their corresponding Birth record, the Child Of – ditto. Informant - ditto.