



23 February 2018

## Bass Island Line Update – edition 46

### The story of John Duigan

King Island will soon be enjoying the benefits of Bass Island Line's (BIL) newest member of the fleet - *John Duigan*.

Bigger and faster, the new vessel is expected to deliver an improved service between Victoria, the island and mainland Tasmania.

However, not everyone knows the origin behind the ship's namesake. This begs the question: who was John Duigan?

A seasoned seafarer with a strong affinity with the sea, John Duigan (pronounced Die-g-uh-n) made an early appearance in Australian's voyage history.

His travels in the 1850s took him wide across the oceans, from Tasmania to the mainland and all around the world. He was also King Island's first registered lighthouse keeper and superintendent.

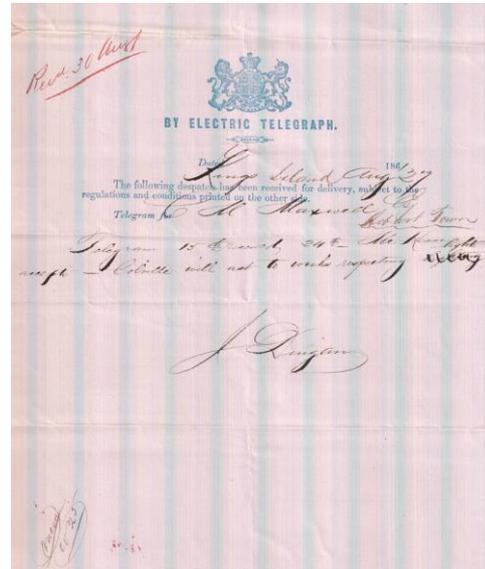
Early in his career, Duigan was commander of the 307 ton barque, the *Phillip Oakden*, which travelled from Launceston to London.

The ship is historically known to have struck the Hebe Reef whilst entering the Tamar River near Low Head on her return voyage. Fortunately for Duigan, there was no reported loss of life from the mishap.

Between 1851 and 1860, Duigan was given command of various vessels. These included the San Francisco bound *Black Eagle*, the Hobart to Melbourne travelling *Petrel*, and the 328 ton passenger barque, *Launceston*.

It was in 1860 that Duigan was appointed as the first lighthouse keeper and superintendent of the Cape Wickham Lighthouse on King Island.

A year later on 1 November, the Cape Wickham lighthouse beacon was lit for the first time, illuminating light from King Island into the stormy waters of the Bass Strait.



*Original telegram dated 1861, sign by J. Duigan during his time as lighthouse keeper and superintendent.*

Known as a 'jack of all trades', Duigan remained as a worthy keeper and superintendent in the year to follow before the role was taken over by Edward Nash Spong in 1862.

On the 1st December 1862, Duigan left King Island on board the *Curcassian*, where he travelled alongside his family to arrive in Launceston.

*We would like to thank Luke Agati, President of the King Island Historical Society and Museum for kindly providing the invaluable information cited in this article.*

### The schedule

The next three sailings are as follows:

- Friday 23 February: General sailing - Depart Devonport 4.00pm
- Saturday 24 February: General sailing - Depart Grassy 4.00pm
- Sunday 25 February: General sailing - Depart Devonport 1:30pm

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### Communications contact:

Leigh Arnold  
0409 019 939