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TROUBLE AT MILL

How the chef, the farmer and the fisherman
are fighting to save their valley

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PULP FRICTION

In the Tamar Valley near Launceston, small business owners are lining up against a proposed new pulp mill they say will ruin their clean, green image. *Matthew Denholm* reports.

John Hammond is an unlikely greenie. A fisherman since he left school at 13, he is a big man with plates for hands, dirty blue overalls and a no-nonsense style of conversation common to Tasmanian blokes of a certain vintage. "I look upon this pulp mill as a tsunami coming ashore in Tasmania," he says. It would be hyperbole from anyone else. But Hammond knows the sea, knows his fish, and knows his beloved Tamar Valley.

He lives in a stunning part of a beautiful state. Vineyards, farms and wooded hills slope down to the wide, meandering Tamar River and its lush, pretty wetlands. Every year some 150,000 tourists travel the Tamar Valley Wine Route, a short drive from Launceston. The region has become a showcase for the state's best produce and leading restaurants. This is an upmarket tourist

territory attracting eco-sensitive travellers along with those who simply love a good meal and a fine drop.

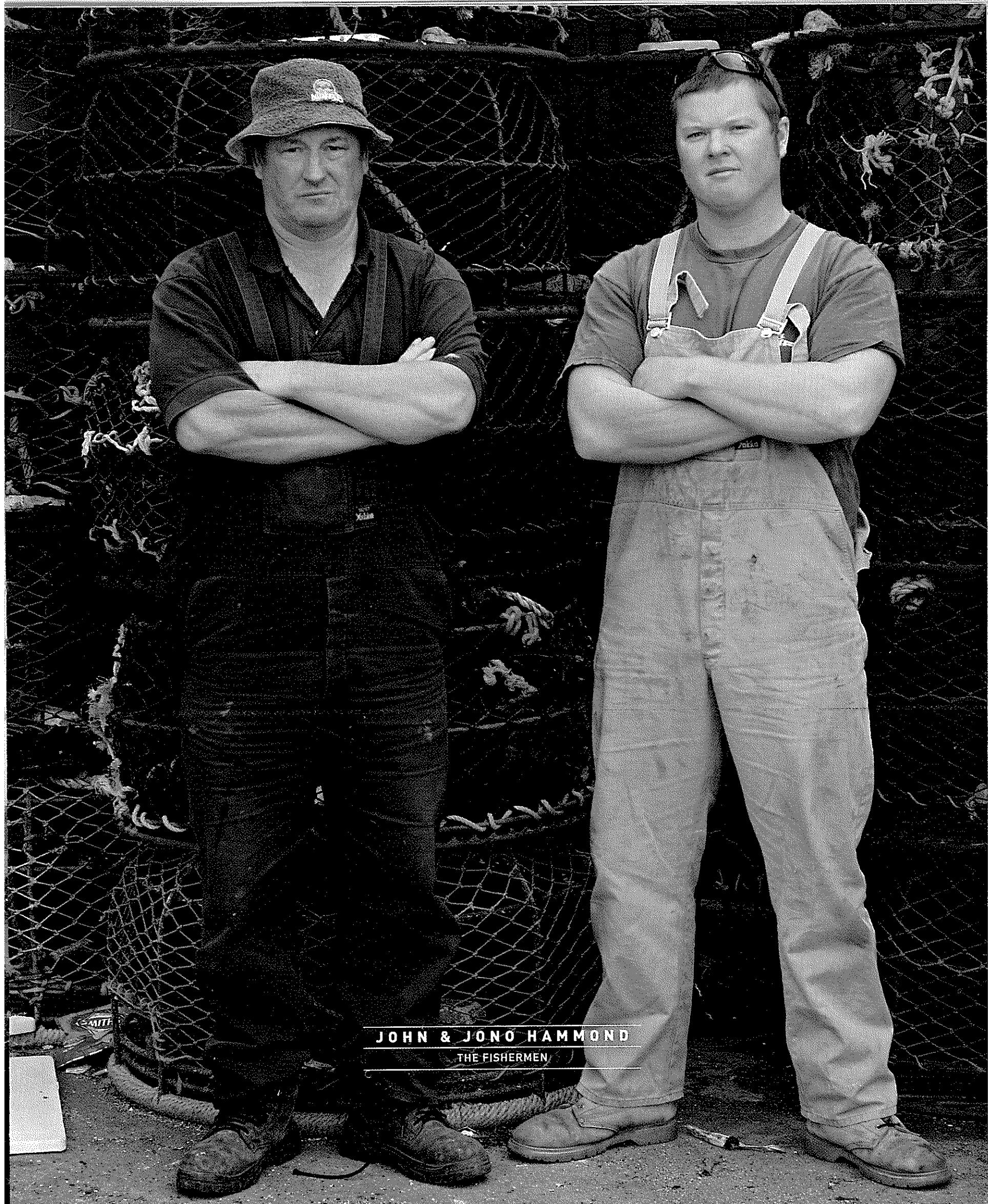
The businesses dotted throughout the valley are the kind of "clean, green and clever" small operations that have driven jobs and economic growth in recent years. And now they are at the centre of a battle with the behemoth of Tasmanian industry – the powerful timber company Gunns Ltd.

The \$2 billion pulp mill that the company wants to build on the site of its existing woodchip mill on the river's eastern shore, 36km from Launceston, has brought to a head debate about the kind of industry – and jobs – that represent Tasmania's future. It has crystallised a very 21st-century battle between the attraction of traditional, large, job-creating projects and small, innovative, service-driven enterprises.

FOR SUBNET IMAGES / MATTHEW NEWTON

"We have the very best, you-beaut scallops in the world," says John Hammond (opposite, left). Below: the Tamar River.





JOHN & JONO HAMMOND
THE FISHERMEN