

# Lost lines from Le Léman : Malcolm Bulpitt looks at the tramway from Gland to Begnins

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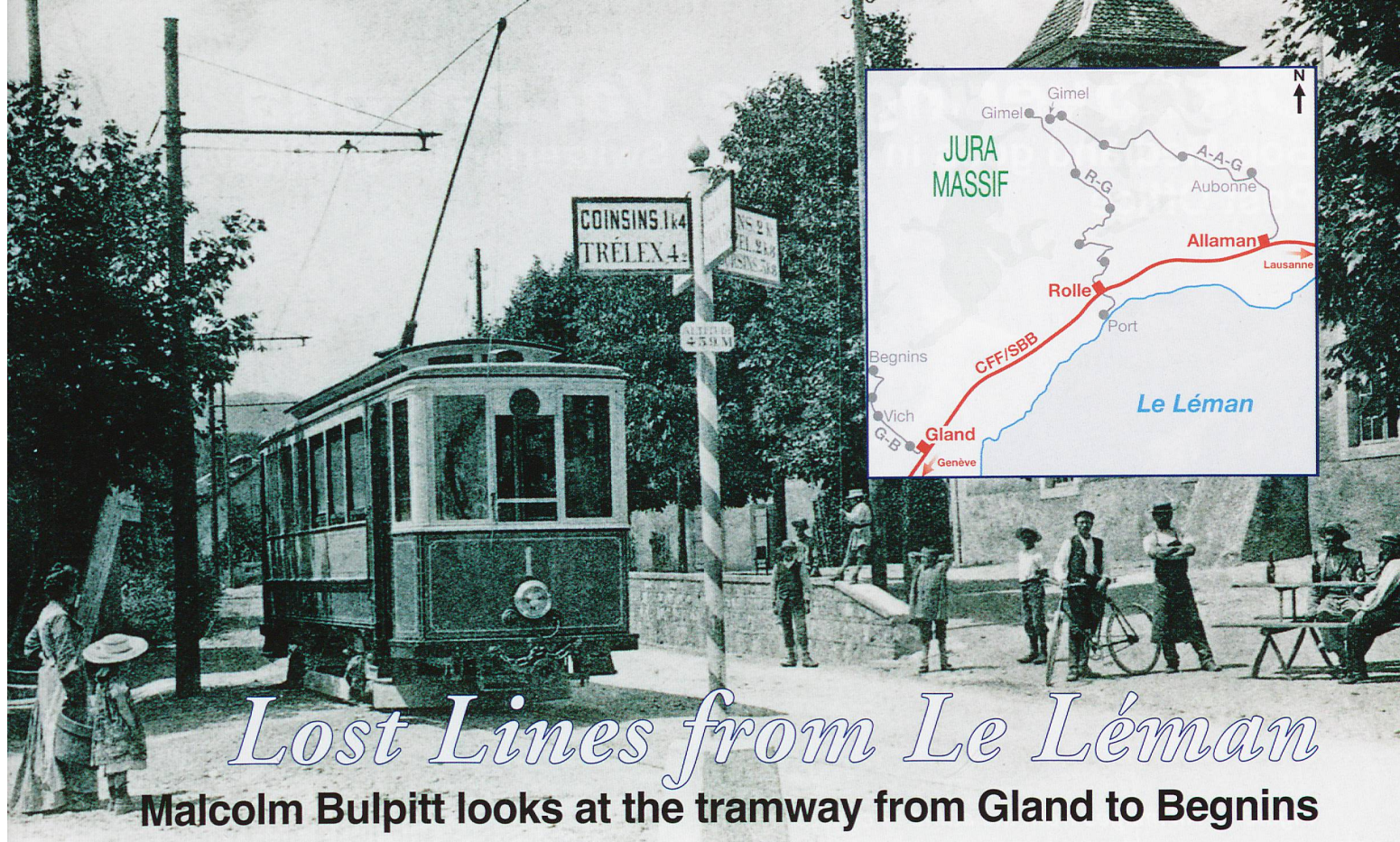
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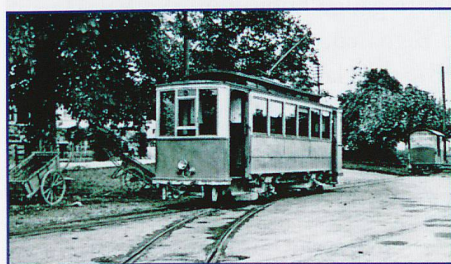




# *Lost Lines from Le Léman* **Malcolm Bulpitt looks at the tramway from Gland to Begnins**

ABOVE: Tram for Begnins at Vich.

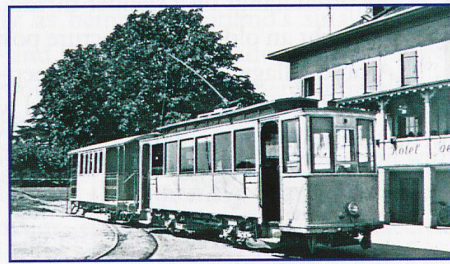
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Autmotrice GB at the station of Gland Au Fond.



Ce 2/2 No.1 and Lo No. 4 at Vich in 1907.



Ce 2/2 and C No.11, (ex. NCB) at Begnins in 1950.

Today the littoral at the base of the Jura Massive along the north shore of Le Léman, stretching between Genève and Lausanne, is the Swiss version of California's Silicon Valley, booming with high tech businesses and multi-national companies that have discovered the equable climate and good facilities. The CFF/SBB main line along the lake is under pressure to cope with ever-increasing passenger numbers, whilst the pleasant towns along the lakeshore have rapidly expanded including Gland that in the last few decades has seen its population rise ten-fold to over 12,000. At the start of the 20thC its population was around 700, a sleepy village with a station on the Jura-Simplon railway serving as a railhead for neighbouring small communities. One, the wine-growing village of Begnins with a similar population, was anxious to be connected to the railway. In 1898, together with Gland and the intermediate village of Vich, a committee was formed to promote this ambition, resulting in a Federal Concession being granted in 1899. The *Chemin de fer électrique Gland-Begnins* eventually opened for traffic in June 1906. It was a 3.7km long metre-gauge street tramway, electrified at 750V DC with a maximum gradient of 6%. Leaving Gland station the line passed its small two-road depot then climbed gently over 0.8km to Gland village and then on another 1.1km to Vich. Here it started to climb through the vineyards gaining 85m in the 1.8km up to

Begnins. To operate the line two 120HP, Ce2/2 four-wheel 24-seat motorcars, Nos.1 and 2, were purchased new from MAN and delivered in a green/white livery. To supplement the passenger accommodation a 15-seat trailer car dating from 1892 was bought second-hand from Tramways Neuchâtel. The line also had a van and an open wagon from its opening, acquiring a Post Trailer in 1912.

Given the then small rural catchment area the tramway served it is unsurprising that it struggled almost from the beginning, and by 1914 it had reduced its original service frequency. By the 1930s the line had settled down to operating at roughly 2-hour intervals during the middle of the day and more frequently in the early morning and evening. The trip took some 17-minutes and offered connections into trains to Genève and Lausanne, carrying in the 1920s and 30s some 70,000 passengers/year. Traffic fell away during the 1940s and by the early 1950s the line and its equipment was in a poor condition as there was little incentive to invest in it. This resulted in its inevitable closure with the end coming in May 1954, following which all the stock was scrapped. Over sixty-years-on there is now little to show of the tramway that once operated in these now prosperous communities except that in Begnins the now-bypassed old main street is called the '*rue de l'Ancien Tram*'. ✚

*Next time we look at the rival routes to Gimel.*