



# The Ramble 554 - 30/12/25

**A Happy New Year!**

**May Your Notebook Be Festooned With  
Winners In 2026!**

|                        |                           |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| Monday 5th January     | [555]                     |
| Monday 12th January    | [556]                     |
| Monday 19th January    | [557]                     |
| Wednesday 28th January | [558]                     |
| Monday 2nd February    | [559]                     |
| Monday 9th February    | [560]                     |
| Monday 16th February   | Krokusvakantie Holiday    |
| Monday 23rd February   | Krokusvakantie Holiday    |
| Monday 2nd March       | [561]                     |
| Monday 9th March       | [562]                     |
| Monday 16th March      | [563]                     |
| Monday 23rd March      | [564]                     |
| Monday 30th March      | [565]                     |
| Monday 6th April       | Easter Monday - No Ramble |
| Monday 13th April      | [566]                     |
| Monday 20th April      | [567]                     |
| Monday 27th April      | [568]                     |



It looks like you're writing  
unsubstantiated nonsense.  
Would you like to turn on  
all caps?

## For The Diary

**If you know of an event, let me know and I will put it here.**

### 2026

**Shrove Tuesday** is on Tuesday 17th February and there are Krokusvakantie Ski Trains on Friday 13th & 20th returning on Sunday 15th and 22nd.

**Good Friday** is on Friday 2nd April

**Easter Monday** is on Monday 6th April

**May Day** is on Monday 4th May

### **Severn Valley Diesel Gala - Thursday 14th May to Sunday 17th May**

If you have not been to a UK Diesel Gala this is usually one of the best to go to. I have started to make a week's holiday of it.

**Spring Bank Holiday** is on Monday 25th May

### **Stoomtrein Dendermonde-Puurs - July 4th & 5th**

On Saturday 4th & Sunday 5th July the SDP usually kicks off their tourist season with Scheldeland in Steam.

### **Tomorrowland**

First Weekend Wednesday 15th & Thursday 16th inbound  
Sunday 19th and Monday 20th outbound

Second Weekend Wednesday 22nd & Thursday 23rd inbound  
Sunday 26th and Monday 27th outbound

### **Chemin de fer à vapeur des 3 vallées [CFV3V] - July 18th**

On this weekend the CFV3V usually have some form of event.

### **Chemin du fer du Bocq - August [14th], 15th & 16th [17th]**

The 2025 Festival is usually on this weekend. At the time of writing it will depend if the monumental works on the track have been finished.

### **Pukkelpop - Thursday 20th to Sunday 23rd August**

Sometimes there are extra trains and it is always busy in the Hasselt area.

### **Innotrans 2026 - Tuesday 22nd to Friday 25th September**

One of the biggest train events is Innotrans at Berlin Messe. [Trade Only]



# Belgische Nachrichten Nouvelles belges Belgisch Nieuws

## Rail Connection to Casier and Keyser

What I fail to understand is why Infrabel took out the rail connection to Casier in Deerlijk and Keyser and Fils at Courcelles. There are costs associated with a full connection but surely an occasional use ground frame or even an occasional use power operated point could have been left. Only for occasional use and only for use in a temporary engineering possession where the point is moved, the stock is delivered and the point moves back. No need for expensive interlocking signalling which needs maintaining.

Perhaps the connections were not being used enough to be cost effective for Infrabel to support them. However Infrabel should have taken in the wider picture.

Now there is a real problem with Ecore at Aubange being the only major scrapyards rail connected. There is some scrapping going on at Monceau by Keyser's who are probably having to road the metal back to their yard by truck. Some scrapping is also going to start on the Brussels Docks line. I do not know if this is at the scrap yard there or the metal is going to be loaded onto a barge for processing elsewhere.

There was also Galloo at Gent as well which had a one way siding for delivery of material as the processed metal left by barge. Not sure if their siding is still operational.

As UK readers will be aware, Unimetals [nee Sims Metals, nee Birds Metals] has gone into Administration. Their site in Newport has been scrapping a lot of rolling stock recently with weekly trains of 455 units going for processing. In the topic about this on WNXX, 808 Centaur said this - "China is not buying in scrap at anything like the quantities it used to, and domestically we do not recycle anything like the scrap we produce. Another reason to change how we produce refined metals in the UK. China is now insisting on ferrous and non ferrous scrap having 99.1% purity and few countries can guarantee that. Alternative markets for scrap are a fraction of what China used to be. What scrap is used in China comes from near neighbours in the Far East."

So there are all these vehicles to scrap and no market for the metal. The Arcelor Mittal works at Belval takes in scrap metal for its electric arc furnace and this may be where most of the ferrous scrap from Ecore at Aubange goes.

<https://gmk.center/en/news/arcelormittal-prepares-to-launch-a-new-electric-arc-furnace-at-the-belval-plant/>

Their production is long products, rolled steel joists for the construction of buildings which is then dependent on buoyant market for construction steel in Europe. CFL Cargo runs trains carrying long products into Germany and Poland.

Andy Marshall wrote on 26th November on WNXX, "Seems prices are lower still, got £110 per tonne today, was just over £130 a couple of weeks ago! £180 was more the norm beginning of the year."

So this means that NMBS/SNCB will be getting less money for their scrap and may actually be paying the scrap merchants to process their vehicles.

## HLE 17

The introduction of the HLE 17s has been delayed into 2027.

A HLE 17 is a Class 188 and the list of countries where the Class 188s can operate is growing. The big difference is that the HLE 17 is sat on go faster bogies.

Another difference is that the HLE 17 will be used in a push/pull formation with an I11 driving trailer. The I11 driving trailer is older technology but the HLE 17 is computer controlled [fly by wire]. It is proving beyond reasonable doubt that the locomotive will do what on board systems and the human operator requires it to do, especially from the I11 driving trailer. The HLE 17 is to work in Germany in push pull mode where getting things past is difficult and in the Netherlands where they are just difficult when it comes to anything Belgian.

The HLE 17s will be built in Kassel and it only takes about two weeks to assemble one. The body arrives from Wrocław in Poland already painted with internal cabinets and fixtures in place. At Kassel they install the electronics and place the locomotive on bogies that have come from Siegen. I am not sure if the traction packages are made on site at Kassel. The locomotive is tested and out the door.

This photograph of the Kassel production line is from 2017.



What NMBS/SNCB have done is got four locomotives as a pre-series which they are using for testing. Once they have the locomotive they want and they are homologated for the countries where they will operate, then Kassel can build them fairly rapidly. It is Class 188 body, the internals are Class 188 and the only thing that is bespoke are the bogies. It is the whole point of a proven modular design!

## **HLE 18**

When the Quigo services from Brussels to Paris first started the HLE 18 locomotives used were drawn from a pool of 1863 to 1873 allocated to Kinkempois Depot. I saw a photograph of 1856 of Oostende Depot at Paris Nord on 19th December 2025 and put it in last week's Ramble.

One of the readers replied. "It was correct that a limited number of locomotives were going to Paris for OuiGo. Now, a lot of other HLE 18's have received an ETCS upgrade. They have now ETCS Baseline 3 on board. If my information is correct, 1810, 1815, 1817, 1820, 1828, 1832, 1834, 1836, 1837, 1849, 1856, 1859 are allowed in France. Last week, I was in Mons and I saw 1828 with OuiGo 63 to Brussels."

I expect that the majority of HLE 18s visiting Paris will be from Kinkempois Depot as the Paris Diagrams are NK HLE 18. However if an Oostende HLE 18 gets put on then it will potentially keep whizzing until it needs a home depot exam [or Kinkempois' availability figures improve].

Of course, what is good for Paris is good for the 25kV network in the rest of France as well.....

## **HLE 21**

There appears to have been no recent HLE 21 activity

## **HLE 27**

2730 ran on 22nd December 2025 from Forest-Leuven-Muizen-Schaerbeek with an M6 driving trailer and was also seen light engine on the same date.

## **HLE 28/29/186**

Word is that 186 001 & 002 will be joining the fleet of B-Transport as 2851 and 2852. The current TRAXX Fleet belonging to Alpha Trains is going to Brugge Works to be upgraded to ETCS Baseline 3 and the Dynamic Duo will provide cover for the locos away for this work. It makes a lot of sense as the ex-NS TRAXX are already passenger coach wired and homologated for the High Speed Line.

I do not know what livery they will be in but a sensible suggestion is Akiem Gray with Belgian numbers and flashes. They could be painted in Akiem Gray and get yellow noses like 2869 to 2872 but in vinyl with the 28xx numbers on the stickers.

When I first heard I thought it was a bit strange as as the production series HLE 17s should start have started to arrive from March and I could not see the Belgians wanting brand new locomotives sat around whilst paying leasing charges on others. As it is, the HLE 17s will not now be entering service en mass until 2027 [see above] and it is not known when in 2027 they will start. January and December are both in 2027!

I am assuming that there will be an agreement with Alpha Trains for the handback of the current 28xx series similar to the one for 2814 to 2843. The handback to Alpha was timetabled and the locomotives were stopped and handed back on time. 186 001 & 002 may be on a more flexible hire and so could be handed back at shorter notice which may give B-Transport some manoeuvrer room. All you need is reach a trigger point for handback of Alpha locomotives and the expected number of HLE 17s not be available - to find yourself right in the D'Orly Carte.

Word on the streets is that the availability of the NMBS TRAXX fleet is not good at the moment and this is leading to cancellations.

There is some restitutie work to do on the HLE 28 locomotives [like NS are doing], where things like the passenger door opening module is taken out and the door opening buttons removed from the Driver's Desk.



TCA in Athus were testing Vectrons 7193 114 + 7193 116 on 22nd December 2025. Train 60657 is TCA 22:43 Antwerpen D.S. Noordzeeterminal - Antwerpen Noord (23:12 - 05:45) - Athus Faisceau (11:25). Departed 20 early and arrived 50 early, so looks like it was fairly successful.

It is expected that TCA will take on the Vectrons and return 186 209 and 186 235 which is the locomotive in TCA colours. 186 235 is seen here on 6th November on Line 139. Photograph by Lucian Claeys



## HLR 77/78

In surprising news it appears that 7701 is for repair after all. Both it and 7705 had a collision in 2023 and 7701 was quoted as being for component recovery and then scrap.



It has turned up at Salzinnes after being delivered by road.



7705 is also at Salzinnes and is also for repair. A welder is currently spending a lot of time working on 7705.

## AR/MW 41

Word is that 4133 is at Salzinnes as a test bed for an upcoming major overhaul. This unit has not worked since 12th March 2024. I found this surprising as the MW41s are due to be replaced by the battery variant AM/MS 30 later in the decade. The complete phase-out of the MW41 depends on the proper functioning of the battery-powered version of the MS30, which may not be available in the first year of delivery.

## Gent St. Pieters Info Point



<https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2025/12/25/gent-werken-sint-pietersstation-container-infopunt-werf-vertragi/>

In Gent the Infopoint at Sint-Pieters station is to disappear after fifteen years. The red container was there to inform people about the redevelopment of the busiest station in Flanders. Now that the final phase of the redevelopment is in sight, the container has to give way to a new passage.

At the end of November, the famous red container was empty. The striking building is to disappear to make way for the Cloquetgang which is a new connection between Princess Clementinalaan and the Sint-Denijslaan.

The container was placed there to inform people about the redevelopment of the station. This is now entering the final phase and the intention is that the project will be finished by the end of 2028.

## NS Vectrons

It is alleged that NS are keeping five Vectrons and returning eleven. So far it is thought they have returned ten.

It was also alleged that NS were to return the eleven locomotives by the end of 2025.

6193 733 has returned from Revision and was in service on 23/12/25.

6193 500, 759 and 939 went back to Germany on Sunday 28th December 2025. 500 was plain white, 759 was full ELL and 939 had ELL stickers on the cabs.

This leaves 6193 263, 733, 735, 737, 931 and 956. 6193 735 has not worked passenger since 27/11/25.

There is a rumour they're all being replaced by either new ELL locos, or ÖBB 1293's.

There are also reports that 193 347 is going to be used for testing driverless operation from February 2026. This is something I do not agree with. The driver is there for a reason and that reason is safety.

Here is ex-NS 6193 499 in MAV livery at Budapest Keleti on 26.12.25.  
Photograph by Ted Slee



## NS Units

ICNG



Here is set 3114 making it's first run in the Netherlands on 23rd December 2025. After heading to Heerenveen we see the train set here at the height of the Kooiweg between Heerenveen and Wolvega. Photograph by Jelle Jan Postma and posted to ICNG Intercity Nieuwe Generatie NS on Facebook.

SLT

Out of Service (Collision Damage): 2435  
2435 collided with a car near Lisse on 15th December.

### **Months of Closure Required in 2028 for HSL-Zuid Repair**

<https://www.treinreiziger.nl/in-2028-maandenlange-stremming-nodig-voor-herstel-hsl-zuid/>

The High-Speed Line (HSL-Zuid) between Schiphol and Rotterdam will be closed for months in 2028 for the repair of viaducts, according to rail infrastructure manager ProRail.

ProRail has requested a closure of up to 82 days, almost three months, for the second half of 2028. "This allows us to carry out as much work as possible in one go. Whether we'll need the entire period is not yet certain," the rail infrastructure manager explained on Tuesday. ProRail expects to provide more clarity on the exact length of the closure by mid-2026.

# Blast From The Past



2861 and 2862 basking in the sunshine outside Antwerpen Noord Depot on 8th May 2015. Photo by Robin Melis

Both locomotives are still working for Lineas as plain vanilla 186s.

I am surprised that D/A/B/NL/CZ/SK fitted 186 183 has not found itself on the European Sleeper unless one of you knows different. 186 183 did work the VSOE in July 2024.



# Belgian Can Can



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This turned out to be my last ride behind a HLE 21/27.

2105 on P8800 15:45 Schaarbeek – St. Ghislain at Schaarbeek on 5th November.



2105 on P8800 15:45 Schaarbeek – St. Ghislain at Jubise on Wednesday 5th November.





# Other News



# Railfan Photographer

STARTER PACK



It is time for snow chains





**It's only called an acronym when you pronounce the abbreviation as a real word (ex. NASA). Otherwise it is known as an initialism (ex. FBI).**

**They say you can spot a  
Ladyboy  
by their Adams Apple...**

**I think it's bollocks!**





[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow\\_\(TV\\_series\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rainbow_(TV_series))



Have a nice week

*Tain*