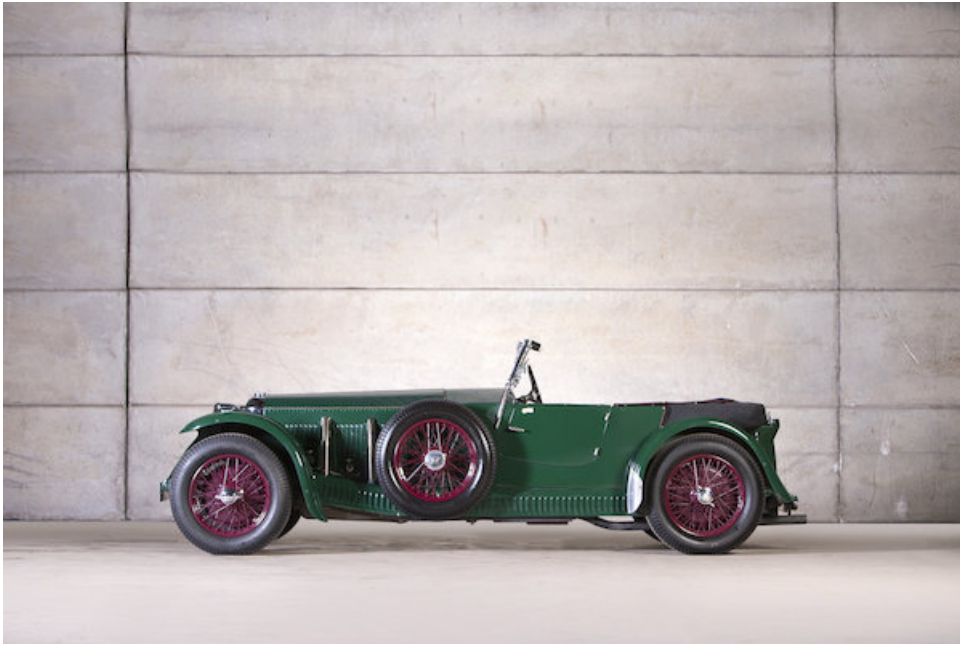



# CLASSIC DRIVER



## 1934 Invicta 4 1/2 Litre

Lot sold	<b>USD 655 755 - 786 906</b> GBP 500 000 - 600 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1934	Condition	Used
Chassis number	S165	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	5	Engine number	8083

### Description

1934 Invicta 4½-Litre S-Type Low-chassis Tourer  
Coachwork by Carbodies  
Registration no. DSK 740  
Chassis no. S165  
Engine no. 8083

'The low chassis Invicta was probably the best-looking sports car in the vintage tradition ever to be produced in England. I can think of no contemporary unsupercharged motor-car of similar capacity, made here, which could outperform it - and very few built elsewhere...' J R Buckley, 'The 4½-litre S-Type Invicta', Profile publications, 1966.

In an era when most cars stood tall, Invicta's 4½-litre S-Type, with its dramatically under-slung chassis, caused a sensation: few sports cars before or since have so looked the part. The origins of the company known as Invicta Cars go back to 1925 when Noel Macklin and Oliver Lyle, both of whom already had motor industry experience, got together to create a car combining American levels of flexibility and performance with European quality and roadholding. Like the contemporary Bentley, the Invicta was designed by men with backgrounds in competition motoring and both were produced to the highest standard. Price was only a secondary consideration, a factor that contributed to both firms' failure to survive the Depression years of the early 1930s. Like Bentley, Invicta struggled against rising costs and falling sales, the final car leaving the factory, appropriately

enough, on Friday the 13th of October 1933, though a handful of cars was assembled at the company's service depot in Flood Street, Chelsea between 1934 and 1936. It is estimated that approximately 1,000-or-so Invictas of all types were made.

Apart from three Coventry Climax-engined prototypes built at Macklin's home in Cobham, Surrey, all Invictas were powered by the tireless six-cylinder engines made by Henry Meadows. Invicta cars quickly established a reputation for outstanding durability, bolstered by the award of the RAC's coveted Dewar Trophy in 1926 and 1929, largely for the marque's success in long-distance reliability trials, including a round-the-world trip by sisters Violette and Evelyn Cordery.

Launched at the 1930 Olympia Motor Show, the S-type's 'under-slung' chassis achieved a much lower centre of gravity by positioning the axles above the frame rails instead of below as was normal practice at the time. Just about the only thing the S-type Invicta had in common with its contemporary stablemates was the 4½-litre Meadows engine, which was also used for the 'NLC' and 'A' models. Like most low-speed engines it produced ample torque in the lower and middle speed ranges. Indeed, the Invicta can be throttled down to 6-8mph in top gear - despite its 3.6:1 final drive ratio - and will then accelerate rapidly and without fuss, still in top gear, when the accelerator is depressed. The acceleration figures given by the contemporary motoring press speak for themselves on this subject.

The popular '100mph Invicta' tag notwithstanding, standard cars had a still impressive top speed of around 95mph, with more to come in racing trim. However, it must be stressed that the S-type Invicta was primarily a very fast but comfortable high-speed touring car, and though it met with moderate success in racing in the hands of private owners in the early 1930s, its greatest appeal lies in an ability to cover long distances at high average speeds with no strain, either to driver or the machinery. Raymond Mays, writing of the two Invictas he owned in the early 1930s, says that they gave him some of the most exhilarating motoring he ever had, with their ability 'to crest most main-road hills at nearly the century.'

The Cordery sisters having driven a 3-litre Invicta around the world under RAC observation, with no failure apart from an axle half-shaft, it was not considered necessary to prove the S-type by subjecting it to further examinations of that kind. Instead the company concentrated on entering the cars in the most demanding long-distance trials in the motoring calendar, achieving notable successes. The Austrian Alpine Trail was chosen as a suitable test and the S-type duly excelled in this arduous event, Donald Healey twice winning a Coupe des Glaciers for Invicta as well as the 1931 Monte Carlo Rally. Later, the S-type took the International Sports Car Record at Shelsley Walsh hill climb and, by way of variety, the Mountain Circuit lap record at Brooklands in 1931 and again in 1932, courtesy of Raymond Mays.

Invictas are about as indestructible in normal use as a car can be. Over 70 years after the last was built, approximately 68 of the estimated 75 S-types built are known to survive and most are in excellent order, testifying to the fact that they have always been regarded as high quality motor cars. Indeed, in pre-war days there was a club dedicated exclusively to the model and members famously christened individual cars with names like 'Scythe', 'Scrapper' and 'Sea Lion'.

The third from last car completed, 'S165' is one of those assembled from parts at the Flood Street, Chelsea depot after the factory had closed. Registered 'GW 7575' in London, the Invicta was exported pre-war to India, reputedly for a maharajah. Many years later a former Invicta employee, Albert Deavin, recalled that the customer, anxious for delivery of his new car, had telephoned Flood Street rather impatiently and been appeased only when a senior engineer had blown the part-constructed vehicle's horn within earshot of the telephone to confirm that it was well on the way to completion!

A brief article in the Invicta Car Club's magazine 100 MPH ('Overseas Column', 1968) written by German collector, Lars de Jounge, reveals that he had discovered 'S165' in India in May 1965 while it was in the ownership of a trader in car batteries, one Nizamuddin Valuddin Jilani: 'Before him the car belonged to a fisherman, or anyway someone who had to do with fish. Before this owner the car was said to have belonged to an Indian prince.' De Jounge drove the Invicta to his home in Poona, had it dismantled and then shipped back to Germany where it was restored. Invicta 'guru' Maurice Leo

rebuilt the engine in the UK, replacing the lower crankcase with one taken from a Meadows-engined Lagonda LG6.

In the 1970s the Invicta went to the USA where it was owned by Dr Donald Williams (see Automobile Quarterly, Vol. 15, No. 8). While in the USA, 'S165' enjoyed the ultimate accolade of being driven across the Pebble Beach awards ramp. Classic racer and specialist motor dealer Nigel Dawes is the next known owner, purchasing 'S165' at a UK auction in March 1991. The car passed swiftly to Chris Jacques, who acquired the original crankcase from Maurice Leo and retained it with car. In October 1992 the Invicta was offered for sale at Brooks' Olympia auction (Lot 68) and was described as in fine condition, retaining its original bodywork although fitted with a later, and certainly more desirable, Sanction 4 Meadows engine. By this time registered, 'DSK 740', the car had recently undergone refurbishment by marque expert Derek Green.

In 1993 the Invicta passed via Gregor Fisker to a new owner (probably in Germany) but since then the original crankcase has disappeared. Subsequently owned by celebrated collectors Peter Livanos and Victor Gauntlett, 'S165' was offered for sale again by Brooks at their Olympia auction in April 1999 (Lot 650) where its purchaser was Gordon Willey.

Over the last few years the Invicta has benefited from regular maintenance by Jonathan Wood, as evidenced by the considerable number of invoices in the history file, which also contains the 1999 auction invoice, a V5C registration document and an expired MoT certificate (July 2002).

A well known car listed by the Invicta Car Club's Register, 'S165' carries Carbodies coachwork finished in British Racing Green with contrasting maroon wire wheels and matching leather upholstery. Standard 'Low Chassis' features include the louvred side valances, external exhaust outlets, fold-flat windscreen and radiator stone guard.

Representing thoroughbred motoring at its very best, the 'Low Chassis' Invicta S-Type is now regarded as one of the most desirable pre-war sports cars, sought after by collectors for its exceptional driving abilities, style and sheer presence. A guaranteed entry at the most prestigious rallies, concours and race meetings around the world, the 'Low Chassis' has an enviable reputation amongst connoisseurs, and examples are to be found in some of the most important private collections.

## Bonhams 1793

# Bonhams

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