

---

## 1931 Invicta 4 1/2 Litre

---

Lot sold	<b>USD 1 016 910 - 1 242 890</b> EUR 900 000 - 1 100 000 (listed)	Drive	LHD
Year of manufacture	1931	Condition	Used
Chassis number	S80	Location	
Number of seats	2	Fuel type	Petrol
Drivetrain	2wd	Exterior colour	Other
Lot number	20	Engine number	7482

### Description

---

1931 Invicta 4½-Litre S-Type 'Low Chassis'

Chassis no. S80

Engine no. 7482

"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, the 4½-litre S-Type Invicta, with its dramatically under-slung chassis, caused a sensation: few sports cars before or since have so looked the part. The Invicta Company's origins go back to the year 1924 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 a personal background of competition motoring and both were produced to an exemplary standard. Price was only a secondary consideration, a factor that contributed largely to both firms' failure to weather 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' service depot in Flood Street, Chelsea between 1934 and 1936. In all, it is estimated that approximately 1,000-or-so Invictas of all types were made.

Apart from a handful of 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, which was underlined 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 factory-backed around-the-world trip by lady drivers Violette Cordery (Macklin's sister-in-law) and Eleanor Simpson in chassis number 'LC134'.

Launched at the 1930 Motor Show at Olympia, the S-type featured an all new 'under-slung' chassis that achieved a much lower centre of gravity by positioning the rear axle 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-revving engines it delivered ample torque in the lower and middle speed ranges. Indeed, the Invicta can be throttled down to 6-8mph in top gear - despite its relatively high 3.6:1 final drive ratio - and will then accelerate rapidly and without complaint when the accelerator is depressed. Contemporary motoring press reports typically recorded acceleration figures of 10-70mph in 19 seconds, which speaks volumes for the Invicta's legendary flexibility.

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 although 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 a substantial mileage 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/Simpson 3-Litre Invicta having driven around the world only two years previously, under RAC observation, with no failure apart from a broken half-shaft, which occurred while crossing Australia, it was not considered necessary to prove the S-type by subjecting it to similar examinations. Although there was a limited racing programme, the company's main effort focussed on proving the cars by entering the most challenging 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 car left the Cobham factory, approximately 68 of the 75-or-so 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'. 'S80' was named 'Sea Urchin'.

Chassis number 'S80' was originally bodied by Vanden Plas and first registered in the UK as 'GP 37'. Its first owner's identity is not known but by 1938 the Invicta belonged to one Alex J Black, who was followed in 1944 by Luis Juan Castagnino of Cornwall. Next owner Lord Charles Martin of London acquired 'S80' in 1946 and kept the car for two years. Its next owner, James Leslie McConchie of Durham, kept the Invicta for 30 years before parting with it in 1978. William Symons of Otterburn was the Invicta's next custodian, keeping the car until 1987 when it passed to Martin Kölnberger of Aachen, Germany and was reregistered there. 'S80' then had two further European owners: R Bernard of Villers-la-Ville, Belgium followed by Thomas Koerver of Düsseldorf, Germany. The current vendor - a resident of Potters Bar, UK and Aachen, Germany - acquired the Invicta in 2009. Currently registered as 'HVS 978' in the UK, the car comes with a UK V5C Registration Certificate and a German

KZF-Brief.

From 1978, the Invicta was raced by Bill Symons with a Superleggera lightweight body (the car weighs around 1,300kg with cycle wings) and won the Fox & Nicholl Trophy. From 1987, 'S80' participated in numerous races and rallies at venues throughout Europe including Le Mans, Targa Florio, Montlhéry, Coppa D'Italia, Nürburgring, Silverstone, etc.

At present the chassis carries the aforementioned Superleggera aluminium body together with the original Vanden Plas wings. The convertible hood and windscreen are located in the rear for use on rallies. The car's original one-off fixed-head coupé body with its large sunroof, built in 1931 by Vanden Plas, comes with the car, as do the original steps, the second spare wheel holder, and cycle wings dating from the 1970s.

In 2007, the Meadows engine (number '7482') was rebuilt by LMB in Wommelgem, Antwerp to fast road/racing specification (bills of 50,000 available). It produces a maximum of around 180bhp, which is good enough for a top speed of circa 180km/h (112mph). Oil pressure is said to be perfect and there are no overheating problems. 'S80' is thus both powerful and fast, with a good-handling chassis, making it perfect for cruising, rallying or racing.

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 events 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

**Title** Mr

**First name** Jamie

**Last name** Knight

101 New Bond Street

London

W1S 1SR

United Kingdom

**Phone** +33-142611011

**Fax** +33-142611015

<https://www.bonhams.com/auctions/25565/>

---

<https://www.classicdriver.com/en/car/invicta/4-12-litre/1931/700629>

© Classic Driver. All rights reserved.