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# 1931 INVICTA S-TYPE LOW CHASSIS

## 1931 Invicta S-Type Low Chassis

- Carbodies Tourer, Chassis S42, nicknamed "Sandstone"
- Raced by Charles Mortimer in the 1950s at Silverstone and Prescott
- Later owned by Broadway director and Juilliard Professor John Stix
- Lovingly owned by Sound of Music actor Christopher Plummer for over 20 years
- Enthusiastically rallied by current owner before undergoing a mechanical overhaul and Concours restoration in 2020

Founded in 1925 by Noel Macklin and Oliver Lyle, Invicta was a British stalwart from the golden age of small manufacturers. Invicta was Noel's third foray into automobile manufacturing, and by this point, he had honed in on what we now call a "USP" – competition-proven reliability. Whilst not a novel concept, Invicta really perfected build quality with two of their cars winning the Dewar Trophy for outstanding endurance achievements.

Introduced in 1930 at the Olympia Motor Show, the 4 ½ Litre Sports Model was celebrated for its jaw-dropping looks and would soon prove to be just as formidable in competition. With bodies built by Vanden Plas or Car bodies, the graceful coachwork and impressive detailing earned the S-type critical acclaim, but it was thanks to the Meadows engine that the S-Type became famous as the best of both performance and looks. With a thoroughbred chassis designed by Reid Railton, the powerhouse behind Malcolm Campbell's Bluebird Land Speed Record cars, he created a frame that was underslung at the rear and swept up over the front axle. Add to this huge level of torque from the 4 ½ Litre Meadows engine, and it is no surprise that they are such a highly regarded car.

Chassis S42 "Sandstone" was delivered in 1931 as a Carbodies Tourer with engine number 7413 and registered UN6155. Sandstone was first believed to be owned by a Dutch gentleman M. Muller, but later returned to the UK and was raced by Charles Mortimer in the 1950s. Mortimer was an enthusiast, competitor, and eventually dealer who was prominent in the British Motorsports scene throughout the middle of the century. Photos included in the file show S42 in the Relay Race at Silverstone in 1954, which Mortimer writes at length about in his autobiography, and in the Prescott Hill Climb later that year. S42 was next owned by famed Broadway director and Juilliard Professor John Stix. Stix had a healthy passion for cars and directed *The Great St. Louis Bank Robbery* starring fellow petrolhead Steve McQueen during his ownership of S42. Wonderful photos show the low-slung sporting Low Chassis surrounded by chrome-finned boulevardiers somewhere in New York City. Stix sold S42 to none other than Sound of Music actor Christopher Plummer in 1959.

By 1959 Plummer had been acting for 6 years professionally and had a few titles to his name, but most of his success had yet to come. It appears Plummer met Stix on the set of *Omnibus*, a long-running anthology. Plummer wrote in a 2017 letter to the current owner that he had purchased S42 "from the most eccentric theatre director for the amazingly princely sum of 2000 Dollars – the man was obviously madder than I already thought him. The body was painted black, the seats a ghastly faded red... but she drove beautifully!" Plummer lived between NYC and Stratford, Canada, and used the Invicta often for the long drive. During that time she was maintained by Inskip, a repair shop run by Stirling Moss' ex-chief mechanic. In 1960, Plummer moved from Stratford, Canada, to Stratford-upon-Avon to join the newly formed Royal Shakespeare Company. After a few months in the big smoke, he writes that he "decided to send for [his] darling invicta... So I had her shipped over across the pond. A friend of mine Angus Clydesdale took one look at her and fell in love, we never stopped driving her all over London, which always caused a stir." Over the next decade, Plummer would record 14 films, including the all-time great *The Sound of Music*, as well as starring in countless plays.

In 1973 Clydesdale inherited his title and used some of his inheritance to ensure that the pair's beloved Invicta be fully restored and suggested they refinish S42 British Racing Green over beige. Later in the 1970s the BBC did a documentary on classic cars and their

owners including a piece with Plummer and his wife. At the time, the BBC told him there were only 20 Invictas left in the world. He even wrote to the Sunday Express in 1971 trying to trace the original registration for his car, clearly a classic car enthusiast through and through!

Plummer eventually parted with her because "back in the states I couldn't park her anywhere... the rotten kids never stopped scraping it with their knives." He also references S42 fondly in his autobiography! COYS of Kensington sold S42 to Joe Teagarden of Connecticut in 1986, where S42 spent a few years before being sold through Dan Margulies to Malcolm Hoyle in 1989. Hoyle had the car restored by Richard Proctor and sold her to Victor Matteu (NL). Matteu sold her to Frederick Lievre and then through Fiskens, S42 was purchased by her current owner.

The current discerning owner has carried on S42's previous custodians' enthusiasm, covering over 8000 km in rallies all over the globe, including in the 2016 HAKA Rally in New Zealand, and in Georgia and China in 2019. In 2020, S42 underwent a complete mechanical overhaul and is presented in Concours condition, having just been displayed at the 2025 Salon Prive Concours.

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