A Brief History of Lawton Hall and the Lawton Family

Lawton Hall can be dated back to Adam de Lauton who lived during the reign of King John (1199-1216) and King Henry III (1216-72). Historical legend tells of a time in his life when he rescued the Earl of Chester from an attack by a wounded animal and in gratitude was granted "that amount of land around which he could walk in a day".

His walk covered a one thousand acre parcel of land that originally stretched from Congleton to Sandbach and as far as Longport. It was this thousand-acre estate that became the Parish of Lauton.

In the late twelfth or early thirteenth century the de Lauton family built a home on land acquired from the Crown. It stood for some two hundred years until the beginning of the fifteenth century when it burned to the ground.

After this another and more substantial home was built on the same spot by Hugh Lawton and his wife Isabella Madock. This second home had solid foundations and cellars. It is also known to have had a beautiful flagstone floor. This home was apparently removed by William Lawton and his wife Mary Maxfield very near the start of the seventeenth century to make way for a third home on this spot. It is known that the second home did not fall down, nor was it burned.

This latest new home was built about the year 1600 and served the Lawton family through many generations.
Bullie the Bullfinch

In front of the Hall stands a permanent memorial to Bullie the Bullfinch, the cherished pet of Marianna Percy Lawton, former lady of Lawton Hall. Bullie was known to sing the National Anthem on request. The gravestone was originally engraved in 1853 with a dedicated poem written by Mrs Lawton to Bullie. Local councillors, English Heritage, local historians, and local residents held a ceremony to reinstate the restored gravestone following the completion of the redevelopment of the Estate.

By 1906 Lawton Hall was being used as a hotel. This continued until 1943 when it was requisitioned for use as a Civil Defence Reserve Camp. At some point the Lawton family had vacated the home.
Shortly after the end of World War II, in 1950, the Hall began to be used as a school. This period of usage lasted until 1986. During this time maintenance of the Hall was poor to non-existent. Following the closure of the school the Hall remained unoccupied.

In 1989 a company named Lawton Leisure Limited applied for planning permission to convert the Hall into a hotel with leisure facilities. The plans were approved by Congleton Borough Council in April 1990 but were never implemented as the Lawton family refused to sell the property, wanting only to lease it.

During July 1994 a company called Robincorp Limited felled about one hundred trees on the property until stopped by an order issued by the Congleton Borough Council.

The Forestry Authority prepared a report for possible legal action against Robincorp, but no action was taken due to questions of ownership. Robincorp submitted and withdrew various plans over the subsequent 3-4 years however no renovation took place.

**Lawton Hall Estate Today**

In 1999 Gleeson Homes took over the development and plans were approved to renovate the Hall, which is a Grade II listed building, by converting it into 5 houses and 4 apartments.
The Stables was rebuilt into 5 homes.

The Coach House was split into 7 mews properties and a detached house.
Properties in the Hall, the Coach House and the Stables have been built on the footprints of the original buildings: the only “new” properties on the Estate are the twelve detached houses in the Gardens: an area of the Estate that would originally have been used to grow fruit, vegetables, and flowers. Part of the original wall is Grade II listed.
The woodlands within the Estate’s acreage contain ancient and semi-natural woodland (ASNW) and a site of biological importance (SBI): a number of trees are protected by tree preservation orders (TPOs) and a woodland and conservation management plan is in place.

Each of the 34 properties on the Estate was designed and built to complement the period feel of the Hall and to be sympathetic to the original buildings and grounds.

Evidence of this approach can be found around the Estate and within each property, for example the use of blocked paved roads, wrought iron Cheshire railings, and traditional landscaping: internally each property has wooden sash windows, slate roof tiles, high ceilings, elegant coving and deep skirting boards: features not often found in new housing developments.
The redevelopment of the Estate was completed in 2004/5. The Estate was awarded a Gold Prize for best development in the 2004 What House awards.

The freehold of the Estate is owned by Wallace Estates who operate through their agents Simarc Property Management Limited. The Estate is “self-managed” through Lawton Hall Management Limited (LHML), a private company established to manage and maintain the Estate on behalf of all 34 property owners, who are all shareholders, and the landlord.

Much of the Estate’s appeal relates to its history, the overall design of the buildings and the grounds, and to the natural environment.

Owners’ property deeds have been written, and contain covenants, to ensure that the overall look and feel of the Estate is maintained in accordance with the way it was designed and the ongoing requirements related to the Estate’s historic importance locally and nationally.