

Terms for Different Types of Thoroughfares in Meldreth

This document should be used in conjunction with our page on the [Highways and Byways of Meldreth during the Medieval Period](#)

The following are examples of the types of roads mentioned in the [Topcliffe Manorial Court Rolls](#):

Highway: the term links to the way in which Roman roads were constructed with a mound formed by earth from the side ditches thrown toward the centre, i.e. a high way. The first recorded example is from the early ninth century and at the time referred to a main road between two towns/cities and one that was under the special protection of the monarch as an essential communications link.

Way is an old name from the Middle English *wey*, deriving from the Latin *veho* ("I carry"), originating in Sanskrit *vah* ("carry," "go," or "move") e.g. Mare Way, Icknield Way. The manorial records include: "a way to Kyggiston" (possibly Kingston) and another in Webbiszerd (which I have not been able to identify). [Elin Way](#) is a modern development in Meldreth.

Lane originates from Old English *lane/lanu*: a narrow hedged-in road and later medieval: a well-defined track e.g. Bury Lane, [Fenny Lane](#). Brewery Lane. The manorial records mention a lane leading to the manor.

Street comes from the Latin *strata* (initially, "paved") and later *strata via* ("a way paved with stones"). *Street* was used by the Anglo-Saxons for all the Roman roads (e.g. locally Ashwell Street, Ermine Street). In the Middle Ages prepared roads were generally only found in towns and street became mainly used for these, e.g. High Street) A law of Henry I said that a town street had to be wide enough for two loaded carts to pass, or for 16 armed knights to ride abreast. A lane needed to be only wide enough for a cask of wine to be rolled along it with one man on each side.

Road is more recent, derived from the Old English to ride: *rād* which became *rode* or *rade* ("a mounted journey") by the Middle Ages and now refers to any route for any vehicle, e.g. Kneesworth Road. Examples of its use in the manorial records are "a road towards Le Frerys" and "an unlawful road being made at Hextonditch".

Close is used for cul de sacs, often in modern developments, e.g. [Bell Close](#). [Malton Lane](#) was called Ball's Close (or Lane) ([Beatrice Clay](#)). In the medieval period to the nineteenth century the term was also used for fields/land holdings e.g. Home Close off Fenny Lane owned by William Whitechurch at [Enclosure](#).

End often indicates a cul de sac such as [Chiswick End](#) (this was originally the termination of a footpath from Melbourn to Meldreth). However, it can also indicate part of a thoroughfare, e.g. [North End](#). It is now no longer allowed as part of a street name in England (but common in other parts of the UK).

Drive was a road that was usually private, and winding, as opposed to being straight. Originally it would have been the entrance route for a large house, for instance [Wimpole Hall](#). It was also used to refer to a route for moving animals. A reference in the manorial records is: a drive in Northfield (next to Malton Lane). A modern Meldreth example is Woodlands Drive.

The manorial records also include:

Path: e.g. the path to Foulmer (presumably Fowlmere).

Footway: as in the common footway (which was obstructed, preventing tenants from getting to the common);

Track: a track on the common (made illegally by driving sheep back and forth).