Master was a Frenchman, Mauger (1198). The brethren's work at Farley must have achieved a good reputation because at the end of the twelfth century Baldwin de Bethune, Lord of the Manor of Luton, gave them 45 acres of land on what is now the south side of London Road extending to Luton Hoo.(1)

Hospital of St Mary Magdalene, Dunstable

The Prior and Canons of Dunstable Priory founded the Hospital about the year 1208. It was intended for the sick including lepers, so there was probably some separation of the inmates. Its location, on the Watling Street towards London just over half a mile from the recently established market town, followed the current practice of isolating the sick. The building was still in existence in 1338 for the Master and brethren received a letter of protection from the King, Edward II, and permission to collect alms. It is believed to have survived the dissolution of the Priory (1539) as there are references to it early in the seventeenth century (1624 Rent List - Master of the Leper Hospital still has land). When the Friars Preachers' buildings were excavated in 1835 and examined in Spittle Close, opposite the 'Half Moon' Inn and on the north side of Half Moon Lane, many relics were found. These included forty feet of wall two-and-a-half feet high; the base of a round column two feet in diameter; stones of a semi-circular arch; window tracery, painted glass, tiles and coffins - one of stone and one of lead, containing skeletons. Old maps of the area, including one drawn by Worthington Smith (1904), mark the road from the town centre towards Half Moon Lane as Spital Hill and it is only in recent years that the name has fallen into disuse.

Hospital of St John the Baptist, Luton

Little is known of this hopsital for lepers which is believed to have stood on Spital Hill between Leagrave and Limbury, about the site of the present Norton Road, well outside the town. Patent Rolls mention its existence in 1285 when Nicholas Hayward imprisoned the lepers and set fire to the house of Richard atte Wynche. He was outlawed in his absence but appears to have surrendered in 1287 according to William Austin. At the Parish Church of St Mary, Luton there is what is thought to be a leper window in the Barnard Chantry (1485 - 1492). Through such windows, then unglazed, lepers could observe and be present at church services and perhaps receive Communion.(2)

Health Care without Hospitals (c.1550-1850)

The whole country was in uproar following the dissolution of the monasteries and confiscation of their revenues which resulted in the loss of a well-structured system of social relief. Monastic alms were no longer available to alleviate the suffering caused and so individuals helped where possible with gifts of bread and clothes for the needy, but there was no organised care. Religious guilds founded nearly a century previously were closed and the traveller or pilgrim who would have stayed at the hospitium now relied increasingly on the growing number of inns, particularly in Dunstable where its importance on Watling Street increased as roads improved and travel by horse or coach became more common.