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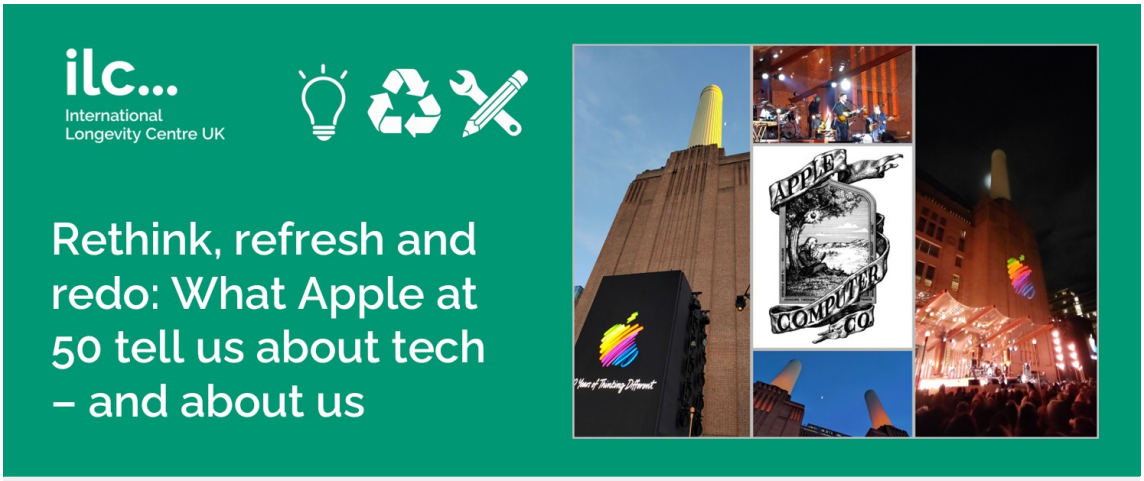
International Longevity Centre UK

Latest news

ILC Friday three

- Rethink, refresh and redo - what Apple at 50 tells us about tech, and us
- China is changing - how demographic shifts impact ancient festivals
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Rethink, recycle and redo - what Apple at 50 tells us about tech



The tech giant Apple turns 50 on 1 April and Emily Evans, ILC's Senior Communications and Engagement Manager, reflects on the impact the company has had over the last five decades.

I was lucky enough to be one of 5,000 fans to get a ticket to a free celebratory Mumford & Sons gig outside Apple's UK headquarters at the former Battersea Power Station – a ticket I couldn't even download properly because I have an Android phone.

It was a cold, clear, beautiful night – and magical. Genuine and real, not at all corporate. And, refreshingly, no one seemed to be pandering to the moneymen.Marcus Mumford gently teased their hosts' optimism in holding an outdoor event in the UK in March – and then, as the band's hands froze, more emphatically questioned why, with all their riches and vast office space, we couldn't all be inside, and warm.

I've long used Apple Macs, but I don't have an iPhone and use other platforms for music and podcasts. So there was a lingering sense of: what's the catch? But in that moment, you couldn't help but feel Apple had used its soft power well, without any need for the hard sell.

In 1976, I turned nine. Memories are hazy – a long hot summer full of ladybirds, alongside the misery of being uprooted and moving continents and schools. Meanwhile, in a Californian garage, Steve Jobs, Steve Wozniak and Ronald Wayne formed a company that would reshape technology, design and culture. Their impact has been enormous – and while we increasingly reflect on the damage done by today's tech giants, some of them have brought magic and joy too.

Steve Jobs' well-documented vision and charisma made him the enduring face of Apple. But half a century on, its lesser-known co-founders have taken very different paths. Steve Wozniak, now 75, left the company in 1985 but remains close to the tech world and a fan of Apple's spirit.

Ronald Wayne, now 91, has spent most of the past five decades far from Silicon Valley. He once described himself as the "adult in the room", mediating between the younger founders. He drafted Apple's original partnership agreement, designed its first logo, and wrote the Apple I manual – earning him a 10% stake in the company. But just eleven days later, haunted by past business failures, he sold it for $800 and later signed away any future claims for another $1,500. His stake would be worth roughly $35 billion today.

Apple's anniversary strapline is "50 years of Thinking Differently". In an open letter, CEO Tim Cook wrote that the world is moved forward by people who think differently – inventors, scientists, students and storytellers imagining better ways. But that what Apple creates is only ever the starting point; the most "meaningful chapters" are written by the people who use its technology to work, learn, dream and discover.

On the day of the gig, we also had a team meeting organised by two of our brilliant interns who are working at ILC as part of their MSc in Global Health. We've done a fair amount of work on generative AI and longevity over the past couple of years, but Megan and Akane pushed us to go beyond the analysis and think more deeply about it – not just what it does, but what it means, and how it makes us feel.

The answers were mixed. Fear, mistrust and uncertainty probably outweighed the positives. But there was also a sense of possibility – that AI might just have the potential to democratise creativity, help us build better communities, and enable more of us to teach, learn and grow from the bottom up. And perhaps, in time, that longer lives will be shaped less by the whims of a handful of powerful individuals. And perhaps there will be much to celebrate.

You can read ILC's report *AI: Generating opportunities for long lives* published in May 2025 via the button below.

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China is changing - how demographic shifts impact ancient festivals



Source: cdn.britannica.com/51/264551-050-1D587985

As dusk descends, the cemetery grows quiet and bleak, only foxes lie on graves, slumbering in sleep.

At night, children return home, laughing and talking by the lamp with their family.

Life is fleeting, so savor the moment with wine. After death, not even a drop will be taken.

Roughly translated extract from poem by Gaozhu (1170～1241)

Just after Easter, ILC's David Sinclair and Arunima Himawan will be in Beijing, hosted by the British Embassy, focusing on China's ageing economy. Around 22% of the population is now aged 60 or over – more than 310 million people. Demand is rising across healthcare, care, financial services and consumer markets. Older people in China are also wealthier than previous generations and are driving spending on health, leisure and technology. The ageing economy is estimated at around 7 trillion yuan and is projected to reach 30 trillion yuan by 2035.

Easter Sunday this year falls on the same day as Qingming Festival in China. Qingming – translated as "Clear and Bright" but better known as "Tomb Sweeping Day" – is celebrated on the 15th day after the Spring Equinox. The ancient festival is one of the most important dates in the Chinese calendar. Families visit graves, clean burial sites and make offerings. These often include food, flowers and joss paper, which is burned as a symbolic transfer of goods to ancestors.

In 2008, Qingming was designated a public holiday in mainland China, following a decision announced in December 2007. The change responded to public calls to recognise traditional festivals and gives people time to return home to pay their respects.

In practice, how Qingming is observed has shifted. Graves are now often smaller and located in large cemeteries where plots sit close together. Cremation is common. The intensive cleaning of graves has become less central. Large-scale migration from rural areas to cities means many people live far from ancestral tombs and would need to travel significant distances to visit. This is also the case for members of the Chinese diaspora.

At Shisanling, an area north of Beijing known for the final resting place for 13 emperors of the Ming Dynasty, these traditions continue alongside newer forms of remembrance. Local authorities have introduced a “cloud memorial” service through WeChat. People who cannot travel can upload photos, write messages and create digital albums for relatives. Some services allow users to generate AI-based avatars to represent the deceased. Digital tombstones link these online profiles to physical graves using QR codes. The Chinese government has supported forms of “online tomb sweeping” in part because they align with efforts to reduce practices it considers superstitious and to promote lower-impact, environmentally friendly alternatives.

There are also changes in how physical rituals are carried out. Burning joss paper remains common, but some cemeteries now offer water-soluble paper for written messages to reduce smoke and waste. Others promote biodegradable urns, lawn burials or tree burials. In some cities, local authorities subsidise alternatives such as sea burials, with set quotas each year.

Qingming now combines long-standing practices with newer forms shaped by distance, technology and environmental policy. These shifts sit alongside wider demographic changes linked to longer lives, migration and evolving family structures.

There will be more on the visit to Beijing and our work on China's ageing economy in future editions of the newsletter. In the meantime, you can read more in the blog below.

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Breaking out - a brief round up of our Future of Ageing workshops



The last edition of Friday three reflected on the main plenary sessions at Future of Ageing 2026 which covered the broad themes across financial security, better communities and inproved public health. The breakout sessions at the conference focused more on how some of those ideas might be applied in practice.

The session led by Intergenerational England set the tone. It explored what changes when policy, places and services are designed with all ages in mind, rather than

treating different age groups separately. This has implications across planning, housing, health and social policy, as well as for how people relate to one another within communities. A consistent theme was agency – asking participants where they sit within systems and what they can influence directly.

In the workshop led by Age International and ILC on the G20, discussions centred on how ageing is often presented as a fiscal pressure, rather than something that can support economic growth. With the UK preparing for the G20 presidency, the focus was on what would be required to translate that framing into policy commitments – including labour markets, financial systems and international agreements. Hon. Bill Morneau's advice on engaging Finance Ministers was to lead with growth and productivity, position ageing as part of the solution, focus on action not just policy, develop clear metrics, work with institutions with a long-term agenda, and have practical policy packages ready to deploy when political opportunities arise.

The session from What's Next focused on individual experience and the gap between longer life expectancy and the way careers are still structured. Participants were asked to *"Imagine sitting across from a future version of yourself. Not to ask what they achieved, but to understand how they navigated uncertainty, what they chose to pursue, and what they chose to leave behind."*

Creating that distance from the present allowed for more honest reflection on what matters and what may need to change. As longer lives reshape careers, and institutions lag behind, it reinforced a central idea: the path forward is not fixed, it is shaped over time through individual choices. What's Next have since introduced What's Next Circles – small, facilitated conversations that create space to reflect on career transitions and decisions that are often difficult to explore elsewhere.

Work and participation were central to the session led by the Centre for Social Justice through its Beyond Midlife Commission. It highlighted ongoing barriers to employment for people in their 50s and 60s, alongside the wider benefits of remaining in work.

Other sessions focused on the environments and services that shape everyday life. The Greater London Authority and ILC joint session on the night-time economy explored how cities can be designed to be more inclusive across ages, looking at accessibility, safety and a broader mix of activities. The session led by Professor Anna Whittaker from the University of Stirling with danceSing focused on the role of digital tools, music and movement in supporting physical activity and social engagement in care settings, including for people living with dementia.

The session led by ILC's Tanya Singh on falling fertility introduced a different perspective. It considered whether declining birth rates reflect changing preferences or structural barriers, and what role policy might play. The discussion focused on principles – including the balance between enabling choice and avoiding unintended consequences.

Our Future of Ageing conference would not be possible without the generous support of Standard Life Centre for the Future of Retirement, Travers Smith and What's Next. You can find further information and highlights from the event, on our website via the button below.

SEE MORE

The Friday three newsletter, edited by Emily Evans, ILC's Senior Communications and Engagement Manager, is usually sent out fortnightly.

To keep up-to-date with ILC events throughout the year, please continue to check our website on a regular basis. If you are interested in learning more about our Partners Programme, please click here.

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