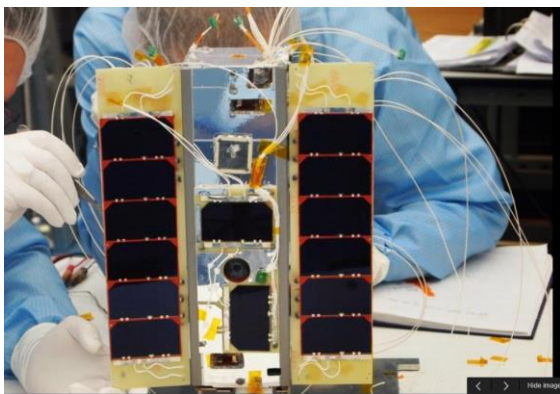


Surrey Space Centre visit of 16th June 2016

On the 16th June, 16 of us from our Astronomy Group visited Surrey Space Centre (SSC), a part of the University of Surrey, located in Guildford. This is a world leading Centre of Excellence in Space Engineering. As well as being part of the university, it is also now a part of Airbus Defence & Space, and they work with others in the space industry across the world.



We were extremely lucky to be given a very interesting talk by Professor Craig Underwood, head of the Planetary Environments Group, followed by a tour of the centre. What Prof Craig doesn't know about space and technology, if indeed there is anything, isn't worth knowing. And Space is big!



Large satellites can take up to 15 years to design, develop and launch. This means that much of the technology involved is already "old-hat" by the launch date, and also that the price tag can be hundreds of millions of pounds. The SSC specialises in small-satellite systems which are smaller and cheaper, typically with a development cycle of maybe a year and a cost of the order of £1 million. This means that they can be much riskier than larger systems as there is less to lose, and this allows for the latest technology to be used.

Much more exciting and cutting edge!

The centre also specialises in space debris collection/removal, and one of the more exciting projects we saw, involved the development of massive sails which get blown along by solar wind and can be used in the collection process.

It was a truly memorable visit, and we are very grateful to Professor Underwood for giving us so much of his valuable time.



*Simon Pyzer
17 June 2016*