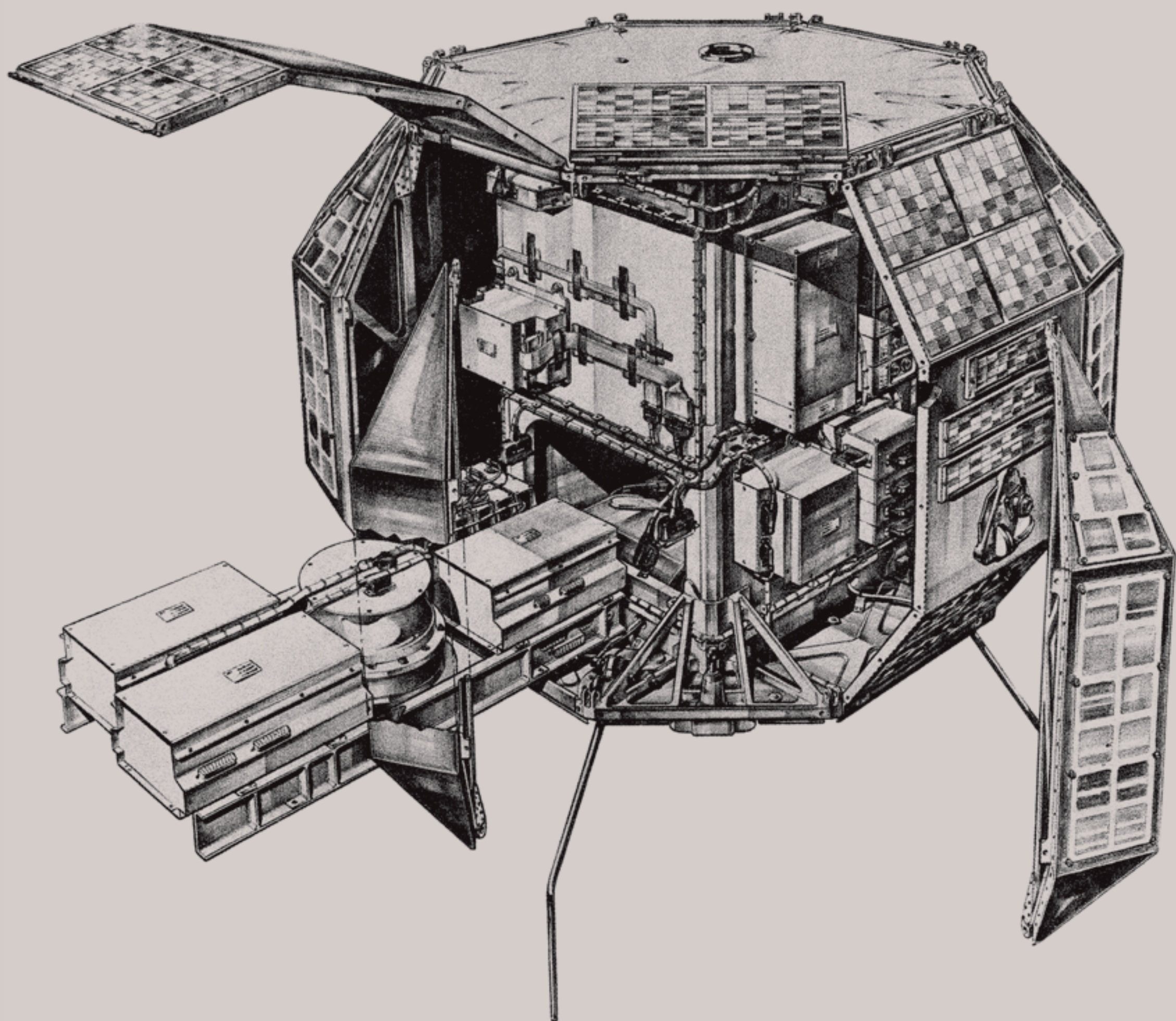


PROSPERO IMAGE COURTESY OF SAUNDERS ROE ARCHIVE



LAUNCH:

28 October 1971

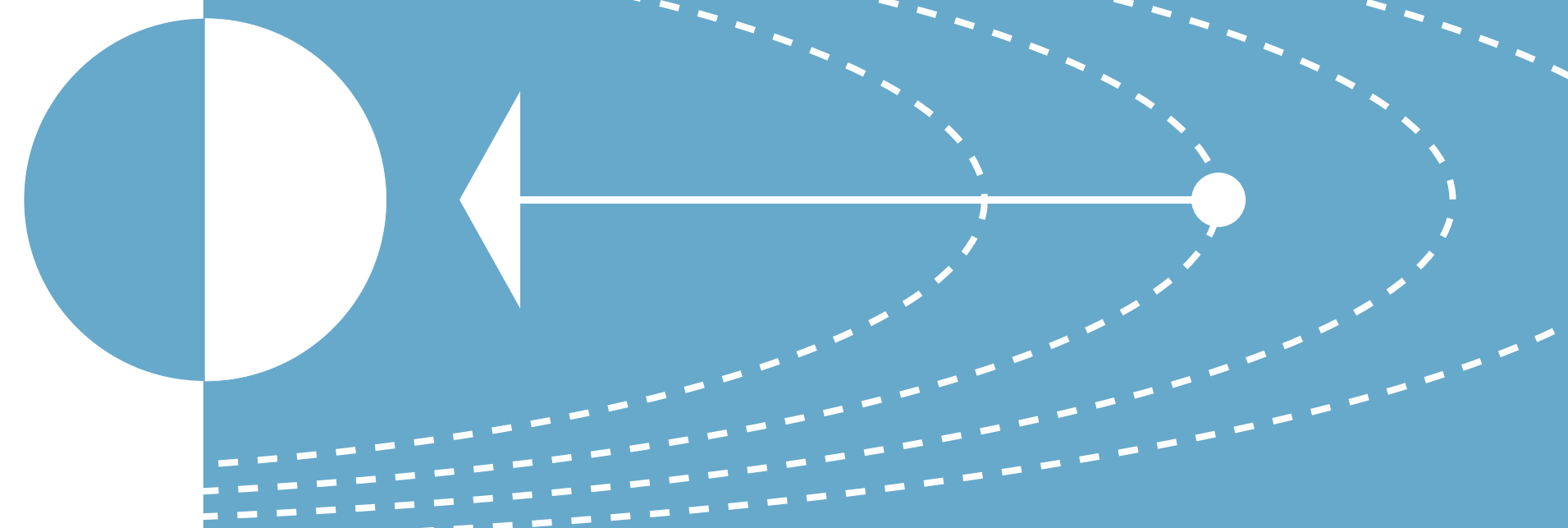
PURPOSE:

Only satellite built and launched by Britain. Built as a prototype containing test materials and equipment.

MISSION:

To send a signal back to earth to show it was in position and that its batteries were charging.

PROSPERO



LIKE THE BLACK KNIGHTS BEFORE THEM, BLACK ARROW WAS LAUNCHED FROM WOOMERA IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA.

On October 28th 1971, Black Arrow R3 launched the satellite Prospero into a near perfect orbit where it remains today. Prospero's batteries are still charged by solar panels and its signal can still be heard today.

The beginning of the end

Only hours after the launch of Prospero, the Government funding for Britain's space programme was cut. The Highdown test site was closed down in early 1972 with the loss of almost 200 jobs. The demolition team moved in and reduced most of the buildings to rubble and the site was left to be grazed by the rabbits.

The National Trust purchased the headland in 1975 which included the Needles Battery and the remains of the Highdown test site.

A permanent exhibition about the history of Highdown was opened in the remains of the test site in 2004.

WEIGHT:

73 kg

(ABOUT THE SAME AS 30 HOUSE BRICKS)

CURRENT SPEED:

18,000 mph

TIME TO ORBIT EARTH

1hr 44mins

NUMBER OF ORBITS SINCE LAUNCH:

250,000+

DISTANCE TRAVELLED:

6.25 billion miles

CLOSEST DISTANCE TO EARTH:

330 miles

(ABOUT THE SAME AS LONDON TO GLASGOW)

FURTHEST DISTANCE FROM EARTH:

871 miles

(ABOUT THE SAME AS LONDON TO ROME)