

CUMBRIA HOT AIR BALLOON CRASHES INTO POWER CABLES

North West Evening Mail Last updated at 12:42, Monday, 07 April 2014

Hot air balloon passengers claim they were lucky to be alive after their pleasure flight crashed into power cables.

Eye witnesses described a flash and a loud bang moments before the Virgin Balloon flight was forced to make an emergency landing in a Cumbrian field.

The flight took off from Ulverston at about 5.15pm on Friday, carrying 16 passengers.

As it prepared to land 60 minutes later, the canvas balloon clipped the power lines causing them to spark and then snap.

The experienced pilot was able to land the balloon in a "normal controlled landing", but passengers – who travel from across Cumbria and Lancashire to experience the flight – were left shaken.

Jeff Hembrow said: "The man from the electricity company told us that we didn't know just how close we had come to death."

A spokeswoman for Virgin Balloon Flights confirmed the incident took place.

"Unlike other forms of aviation, balloons travel in the direction of the wind and do not have designated places to land, but are permitted to use open spaces and grassed areas," she explained.

"Unfortunately, the balloon made slight contact with local power lines. The pilot then proceeded to land all passengers safely without further incident."