

The KWallet Handbook

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Abstract

The wallet subsystem provides a convenient and secure way to manage all your passwords.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Computer users have a very large amount of data to manage, some of which is sensitive. In particular, you will typically have many passwords to manage. Remembering them is difficult, writing them down on paper or in a text file is insecure, and using tools such as PGP is tedious and inconvenient.

KWallet saves this sensitive data for you in a strongly encrypted file, accessible by all applications, and protected with a master password that you define.

TIP

KWallet supports multiple wallets, so for the most secure operation, you should use one wallet for local passwords, and another for network passwords and form data. You can configure this behavior in the KWallet KDE Control Center module, however the default setting is to store everything in one wallet.

A wallet is by default closed, which means that you must supply a password to open it. Once the wallet is opened, the contents can be accessed.

Chapter 2

KWallet Manager

KWallet Manager serves a number of functions. Firstly it allows you to see if any wallets are open, which wallets those are, and which applications are using each wallet. You can disconnect an application's access to a wallet from within the KWallet Manager.

You may also manage the wallets installed on the system, creating and deleting wallets and manipulating their contents (changing keys, ...).

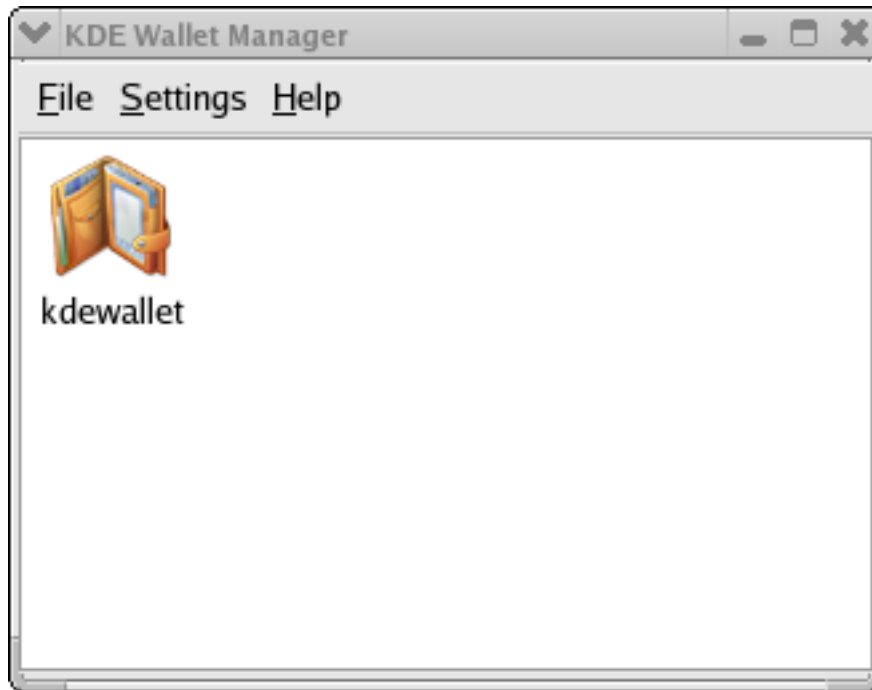
Normally the KWallet Manager application is launched when KDE starts and remains in iconic form in the system tray. Alternatively, when a wallet is opened, the KWallet Manager application will be launched. A system tray icon indicates that a wallet is open:



When all wallets are closed, the icon will reflect this by showing a closed wallet:



Click once on the system tray wallet icon to display the KWallet Manager window showing all available wallets as icons which reflect their current status, either open or closed.

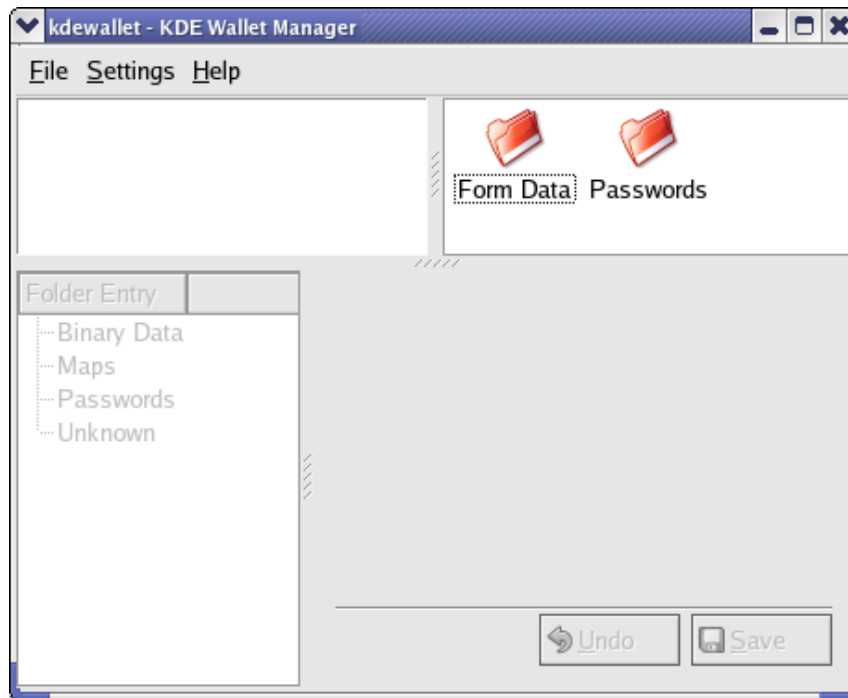


2.1 The KWallet Manager Context Menu

Right clicking on a wallet in the KWallet Manager window offers the following functions:

New Wallet... Create a new wallet. A dialog box will ask you for the name of the new wallet that you want to create.

Open... (Enter) Open the wallet. Opening the wallet causes the contents of the wallet to be displayed in a new window where you can add, delete, or modify the contents of the wallet. You may also double click the wallet icon to cause it to open. If the wallet is not already open, you will be requested to enter the password. See below for details of using the wallet window.



Change Password Change the master password for the wallet.

Disconnect Disconnect an application from the wallet. Currently connected applications will appear in a submenu.

Close Force the wallet to be closed.

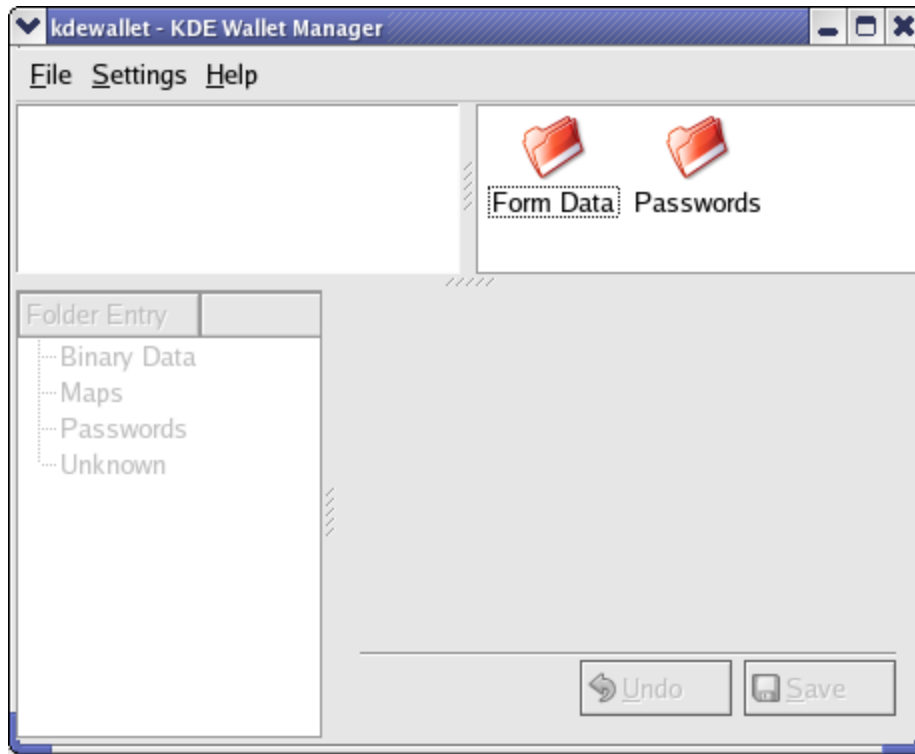
Delete Delete the wallet

2.2 The Wallet Window

Double clicking on a wallet in the KWallet Manager window will open a new window displaying that wallet's contents. A wallet may contain any number of folders, which allow storing of password information. By default a wallet will contain folders named Form Data and Passwords.

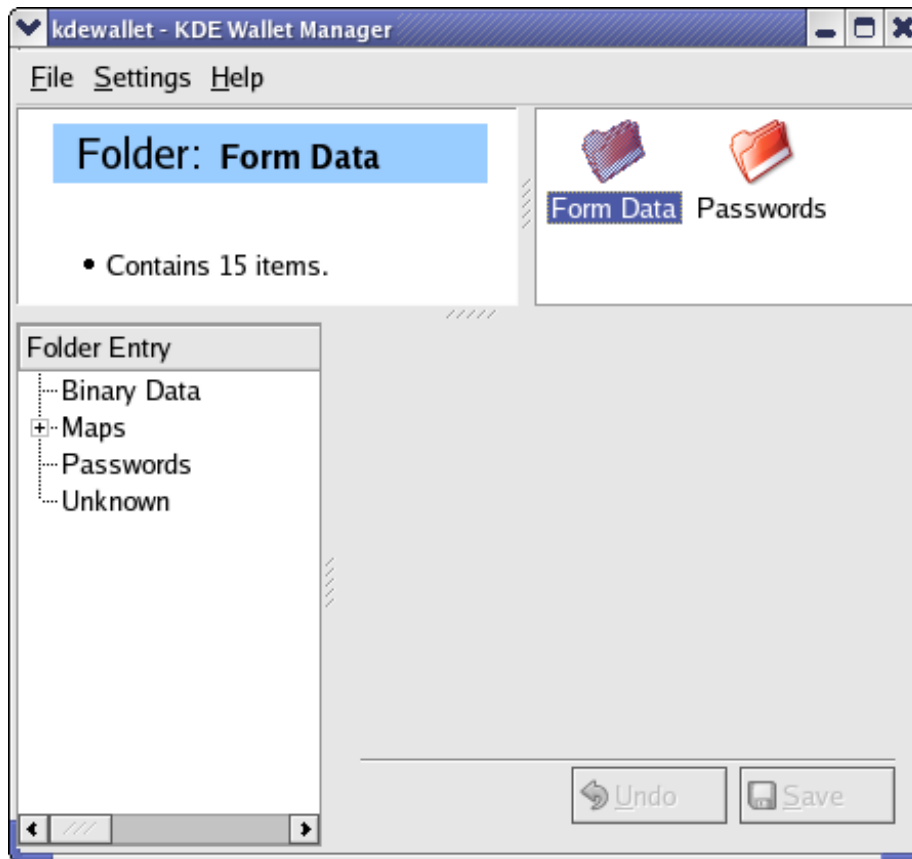
The window has four panes:

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- A summary of the contents of the current folder
- The folders contained in the wallet
- The entries in the currently selected folder
- The contents of the selected folder entry

Folders may be added or deleted, and selecting a folder will update the folder entry list and the summary display. Selecting a folder entry will update the entry contents pane, and allow you to edit that entry.



Entries may also be created or deleted via the context menu for the folder contents.

All folders and entries may be dragged and dropped into other wallets or folders respectively. This allows a user to easily package up a new wallet for transfer to another environment. For instance, a new wallet could be created and copied onto a removable flash memory device. Important passwords could be transferred there, so you have them available in other locations.

Chapter 3

Configuring KWallet

3.1 Wallet Preferences

KWallet contains a small configuration panel with several options that allow you to tune KWallet to your personal preferences. The default settings for KWallet are sufficient for most users.

Check the box to enable or disable the KDE wallet subsystem entirely. If this box is unchecked, then KWallet is entirely disabled and none of the other options here have any effect, nor will KWallet record any information, or offer to fill in forms for you.

CLOSE WALLET

Close when unused for: Close the current wallet after a period of inactivity. If you check this option, set the period in the box, default is 10 minutes. When a wallet is closed, the password is needed to access it again.

Close when screen saver starts Close the wallet as soon as the screensaver starts. When a wallet is closed, the password is needed to access it again.

Close when last application stops using it Close the wallet as soon as applications that use it have stopped. Note that your wallets will only be closed when all the applications that use it have stopped. When a wallet is closed, the password is needed to access it again.

AUTOMATIC WALLET SELECTION

Select wallet to use as default: Select which wallet you want to use as default wallet.

Different wallet for local passwords: If checked, choose a different wallet for local passwords.

WALLET MANAGER

Show manager in system tray Enable the wallet manager to have its icon in the system tray.

Hide System tray icon when last wallet closes When there is no wallet in use anymore, remove the wallet icon from the system tray.

Finally, there is a button labelled Launch Wallet Manager, which does precisely that.

3.2 Access Control

There is only one option on this page:

Prompt when an application accesses an open wallet Signal you when an application gains access to an open wallet.

Next there is a tree style view of the access controls for your wallets.

left mouse button click on the + symbol beside a wallet name to expand the tree. You will see the name of each application that has asked for access to the wallet, and the policy you set for it. You cannot edit policies here, or add them, but it is possible to delete an entry by right mouse button clicking on it and choosing Delete From the context menu that appears, or by simply selecting it and pressing the **Delete** key.

Chapter 4

Advanced Features

Wallets can be dragged from the KWallet Manager window. This allows you to drag the wallet to a file browser window, where you can choose to copy, move, or link the wallet, as desired.

You might use this to save a wallet to portable media, such as a USB keychain, so that you can take your passwords with you to work or on a vacation, and still have easy access to important sites.

Future versions will have built-in functions for easy export or copying of data to portable devices.

Chapter 5

Credits and Licenses

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