# A tutorial for versioning archaeological data using Kart

Andrea Titolo Alessio Palmisano

#### 1 Foreword

The following tutorial have been successfully reproduced on macOS 12 and 13 (Monterey and Ventura), and Pop! OS 22.04 (Ubuntu-based).

Please see the requirements below (Section 1.1) and the useful links (Section 5) for external resources or tutorials.



When using text in CAPITAL\_LETTERS inside a code block/line, it usually means that you need to replace those with your own variables. For example, for a code like mkdir YOUR\_FOLDER\_NAME, if you want your folder to be called kart\_example, you will need to write mkdir kart\_example.

During the Getting Started (Section 2) and Getting Started with Kart (Section 3) sections, the examples will provide mostly terminal commands, since it will be impossible to provide instructions for all the existing graphical file managers (e.g. Finder, Windows Explorer, Dolphin, Nautilus, etc.). You can use a graphical file manager, of course, the textual documentation should be clear enough for that workflow too. Kart commands (identified by the kart prefix) should of course be run in the terminal.

In the Working with Kart (Section 3.5) section, we will instead use the graphical plugin for QGIS but, when possible, corresponding terminal commands will be given. If you are unsure about some commands, the kart command reference is an excellent documentation, otherwise man pages are available for individual commands using kart COMMAND --help, e.g. kart status --help.

While Kart can also be used to version raster data, this tutorial will only cover the vector dataset usage.

We use Github here as our git forge and we will usually mention it throughout the text. However, it is completely possible to reproduce this tutorial on other forges such as Gitlab or Codeberg. When possible we will mention guides for those forges as well.

While this tutorial is focused on QGIS, editing with ArcGIS/GDAL, etc. is supported by kart, although you will not have access to the graphical plugin.

# Note

We noticed some difficulties in getting kart to work properly on older versions of macOS, likely because of outdated versions of git, xcode, xcode command line tools, etc. For a smoother experience we recommend using **AT LEAST** macOS 12 (Monterey) and XCode 13.

On Linux, if you are running the Flatpak version of QGIS, the kart plugin (see below) might have problems finding the kart binary. Switching to a different version of QGIS (e.g. following these instructions) seems to solve the issue, otherwise you might need to see if the issue can be solved using some apps such as Flatseal.

# Note

While this tutorial is presented here in a stable state, it is by no means finalized, we will keep adding and correcting things based on our continuing experience with kart and the evolution of kart itself.

### 1.1 Requirements

To avoid an endless guide, the instructions and tutorial below assumes the following:

- You are familiar with git and you have git installed on your machine (there are many guides available online, for example delv.to, or Atlassian, or this other one). If you don't have git installed, please follow the instruction on the Git website.
- You have at least one authenticated profile for Github (see https://docs.github.com/en/get-started/getting-started-with-git) or for your git forge of choice (e.g.).
- You are are familiar or at least not afraid of using a terminal application (e.g. Terminal.app, Powershell, Konsole, Gnome Terminal, Kitty, Wezterm, Alacritty).
- You are familiar with QGIS and its interface, and you have QGIS 3.16 or higher installed on your machine (otherwise please install it from the QGIS website).

# 2 Getting Started

#### 2.1 Install Kart

Go to https://kartproject.org/ and in the dropdown menu under "Download for your OS" select the appropriate package for your OS. Then, open the file and follow the instruction to install the software.

Alternatively, platform specific instructions follows below. These instructions are taken from the kart official documentation, please always double check the source website before running terminal commands:

#### Windows

Download the .msi installer from the release page.

#### macOS

Download the .pkg installer from the release page.

Or use Homebrew to install: brew install koordinates/kart/kart --cask

#### Linux

For Debian/Ubuntu-based distributions, download the .deb package from the release page and install via dpkg -i kart\_\*.deb

For RPM-based distributions, download the .rpm package from the release page and install via rpm -i kart-\*.rpm

#### Testing install

Test your install by running kart --version in your terminal. If you want, you can follow the Quick Start guide in kart documentation and running kart status at one point.

# 3 Getting Started with Kart

#### 3.1 Set up

<u>If you have never used git</u> you should run the following commands (replacing the quoted text with your actual information):

kart config --global user.email "you@example.com"

kart config --global user.name "Your Name"

To understand what the above do, you can take a look at the Getting Started with Git guide from the Github Docs, specifically the parts about Setting up your username and your commit email address.

If you have already used git, chances are you have the above already set-up, and you can continue on.

Create an empty folder where your kart projects will live and move into it:

#### mkdir kart-workflow && cd kart-workflow

As with git, there are different ways in which to get started with kart. Here we will take a look at the most likely (in our opinion) cases:

- 1. We have already existing data and we want to start versioning from scratch.
- 2. We have versioned data already existing on a remote repository and we want to import those data on our machine.

#### 3.2 A word about HTTPS and SSH

HTTPS connection to github and usually other forges requires additional steps to avoid having git prompting you with a username and password request every time you interact with the server. This is usually solved by setting-up a Personal Access Token or by caching your credentials in Git. Note that failing to cache or save the credentials on your machine in some ways may result in an error when pushing to a remote repository from the QGIS interface.

For a more seamsless experience (in our opinion), you can follow this guide to setup an SSH key pair for Github, but guides are also available for Gitlab and Codeberg.

#### 3.2.1 Generating SSH keys (Optional)

The guides above for creating and adding an SSH key should be exhaustive enough, but we can repeat some steps here. These steps below are general but have been reproduced on MacOS only.

# ! Important

If you have no previous experience, follow the guide above, these steps are not meant to replace it.

1. Generate a new ssh key ssh-keygen -t ed25519 -C "your\_email@example.com" (the mail should be the same used for your github account) and follow the on-screen instructions for inputting a passphrase.

- 2. Ensure the ssh-agent is running eval "\$(ssh-agent -s)"
- 3. If you are on macOS 10.12.2 or later, manually edit the ~/.ssh/config file as explained in the same guide.
- 4. Add the ssh key to the ssh-agent ssh-add ~/.ssh/id\_ed25519 (if you are on macOS, you can store the ssh passphrase in your keychain by running ssh-add --apple-use-keychain ~/.ssh/id ed25519)
- 5. Add the key to your github account following the respective guide.

#### 3.3 Example 1: use an empty Kart repository

#### 3.3.1 Download data

Download the sample data. You can download this file anywhere on your machine.

You can get the data from the same folder where this tutorial lives, by going to this link.

Alternatively, you can use the following CLI tools by pasting the commands in your terminal (Aria2 is likely not installed in your system).

#### Wget

wget https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart4arch/raw/main/static/kart-

#### Aria2

aria2c https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart4arch/raw/main/static/ka

#### Curl

curl -0 https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart4arch/raw/main/static/k

#### 3.3.2 Import data in Kart

Create an empty folder on your machine and move inside that folder (you can use "kart-tutorial" or replace it with your own folder name). Be sure to copy the absolute path of where you saved your geopackage before (the .gpkg extension MUST be included).

kart init kart-tutorial --import GPKG:path/to/your/geopackage.gpkg

For example, if you created the kart-workflow folder in the above steps, and you are on MacOS, your command will look like (run inside the kart-workflow folder):

```
kart init kart-tutorial --import GPKG:kart-workflow-example.gpkg
```

The terminal should output something like this (cut for convenience, your output will be longer)

```
Initialized empty Git repository in path/to/kart-workflow/kart-tutorial/.kart/
Starting git-fast-import...
Importing 4 features from kart-workflow-example.gpkg:archaeo_locationquality to archaeo_
Added 4 Features to index in 0.0s
Overall rate: 1390 features/s)
Closed in 0s
Importing 106 features from kart-workflow-example.gpkg:archaeo_periodisation to archaeo_
Added 106 Features to index in 0.0s
Overall rate: 21077 features/s)
Closed in 0s
[...]
Creating GPKG working copy at kart-tutorial.gpkg ...
Writing features for dataset 1 of 12: archaeo_status
archaeo_status: 100%| | 8/8 [00:00<00:00, 11679.2387/s]
[...]
```

#### 3.4 Example 2: Clone an existing Kart repository

**Do not** use standard git commands (git clone) or Github CLI (gh repo clone) or any other similar commands or CLI tools to clone the repository, as this will not work as intended. Use only the kart clone command.

#### 3.4.1 Clone the repository

We provide a versioned github repo ready to clone.

#### 3.4.1.1 Cloning with HTTPS

kart clone https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart-tutorial.git

Tip

You can use your own folder name instead of the default "kart-tutorial" by adding a name at the end of the command, e.g. kart clone https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart-tutorial.git kartproject

#### 3.4.1.2 Cloning with SSH

kart clone git@github.com:UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart-tutorial.git

#### 3.5 Working with Kart

Run kart status, if you see something like

On branch main

Nothing to commit, working copy clean

you are good to go, the repository has been correctly initialized or cloned. If not, please repeat the above steps carefully.

#### 3.5.1 Install the Kart QGIS Plugin

Kart comes with a useful plugin for QGIS. The source code for this plugin is available on Github. To install the latest version of the plugin, use the QGIS Plugin Manager and search for the Kart plugin. Alternatively, you can get the latest version from the release page, then open the QGIS Plugin manager and install the downloaded zip file.

As long as you have kart installed, the plugin can also take care of creating a new repo, cloning an existing one (i.e. the steps we did above), etc. The plugin has an excellent documentation with substantial graphical examples, so we link to the official docs instead of rewriting our own.

#### 3.5.2 Set up the plugin

Not much setup is needed, the plugin should identify the kart binary automatically. If not, go to Plugins > Kart > Settings menu to open the settings dialog. In the Kart executable folder field, enter the path to your Kart executable. If the Kart folder is not configured, the Kart plugin will use the default install locations, as follows:

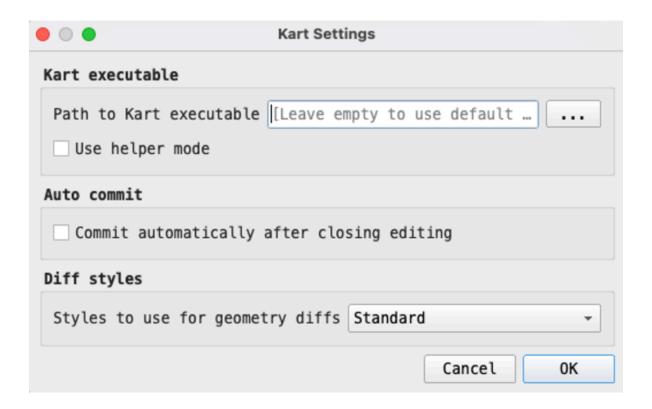
• Windows: %PROGRAMFILES%\Kart\

• OSX: /Applications/Kart.app/Contents/MacOS/

• Linux: /opt/kart/

We also recommend toggling off the option "Commit automatically after closing editing". Depending on your editing workflow, you might end up with hundreds of commits adding one point each without realizing. Of course, this means that you will have to remember to commit your edits manually.

When changes have been done, close the plugin dialog box with "Ok".



#### 3.5.3 Connect to a local repository

If a side panel has not already appeared, click on Plugins > Kart > Repositories to open the kart panel. The panel will look empty, but we will populate it with the repository we created before.

k	art	repositories					@ <b>X</b>
		right-click		for	available	actions	
	· =	<b>■</b> Repositori	es				

In order to do so, right click on "Repositories". You will see a list of options: the last two (*Create new repository* and *Clone repository*) are graphical replacement to the steps we did before (Section 3.3 and Section 3.4).

Click on Add existing repository... and navigate to the kart-workflow folder we created before, then click on "Open".



You will see the repository path now listed inside the panel under the name path/kart-workflow/kart-tutorial [main]. The [main] bit indicates the branch on which we are working (just as the git branches, more on this on the kart documentation and below in Section 3.6.1).



Tip

For more information on the data, see the Appendix or our wiki section.

#### 3.5.4 Load data inside the project

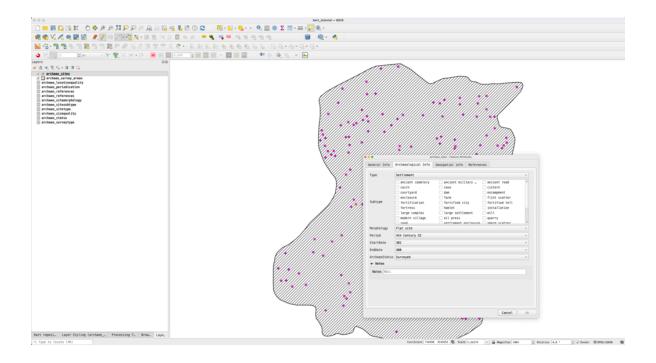
What you connected to is what kart calls working copy, i.e. a file living on your computer that you can interact with through GIS. Kart uses different working copy types, in our case the Geopackage working copy.

To add the layers to our QGIS project, expand the repository tree by clicking on the arrow button on the left in the kart panel. Right-click on the archaeo\_sites layer and click on Add to QGIS Project. A point layer should appear on the map and the CRS should change to EPSG:32636. Add also all the other layers (you should have 10 tabular layer and another 1 geometry layer. Add all of them except the layer\_styles layer. These table layer are background data useful for populating records in the main layer (archaeo\_sites) through QGIS value relation widgets.



#### 3.5.5 Add new geometry to existing layers

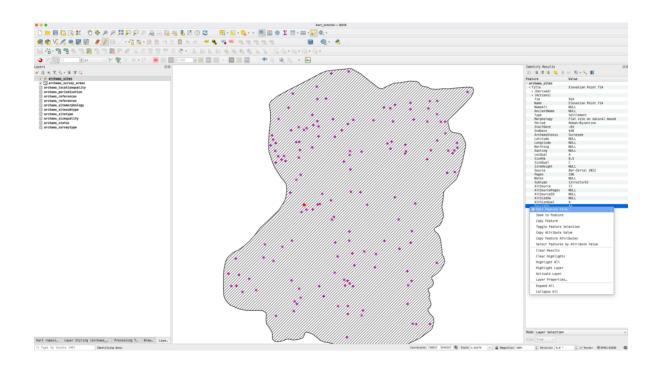
You can now proceed to add new data as you would do normally in QGIS. Toggle the editing for the archaeo\_sites layer and click on the Add Point Feature button. Click anywhere and add a new point. Fill the attribute table however you like. The tab structure you will see in the new feature prompt is thank to QGIS attribute form feature, and because the style of the layer is saved inside the geopackage, and versioned in kart as well (this was the layer\_styles layer present in the repository listing in the kart panel.

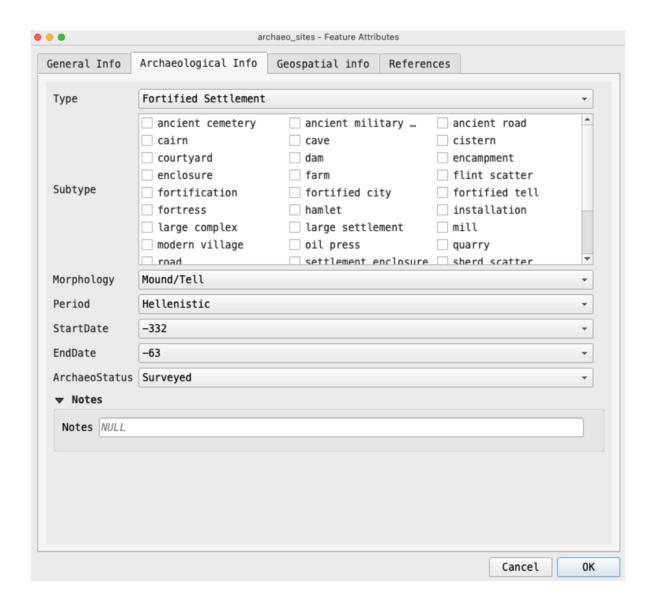


Save the edits by either closing the editing tool or clicking on the Save Layer Edits button.

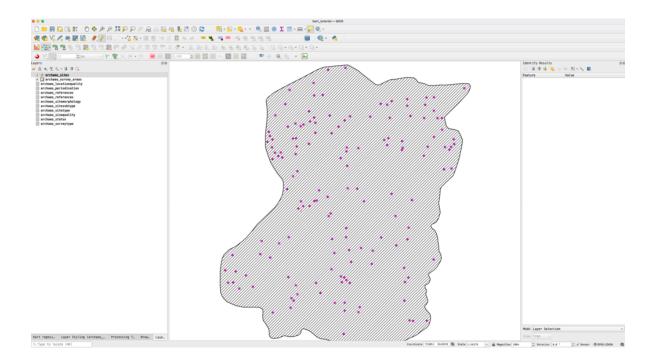
#### 3.5.6 Edit an existing geometry

Let's edit an existing point now, for example by changing its position and modifying some attributes. Use the identify features tool to quickly access the attribute table of a point of your choice, and right click on the identify panel to bring up a contextual menu. From this menu select *Edit Feature Form*. Edit the attribute table, e.g. changing the site type or the periodization, and saving your edits.



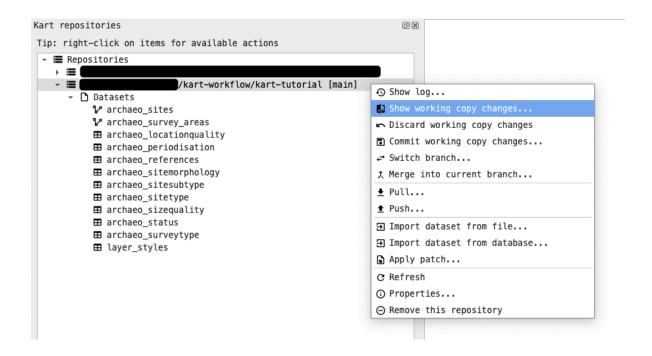


Now let's also change the location of one of the points. It can either be the same one or another, but for an easier visualization later, it might be best to edit points near the one we added before. Use the move feature tool to do it and move a point a bit further from its actual location, saving the edits after.

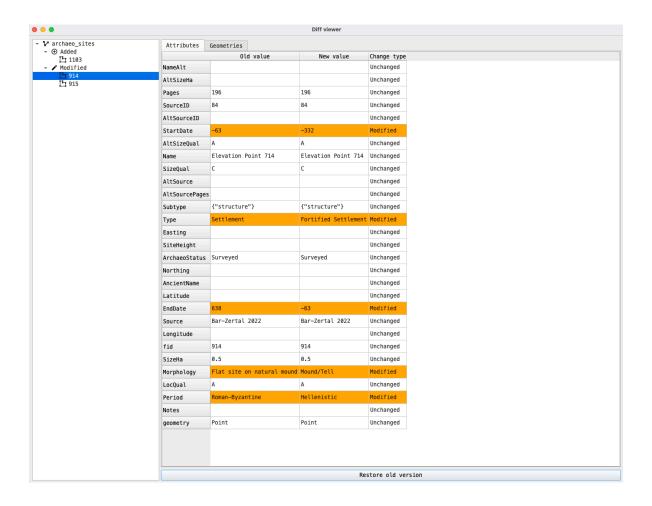


#### 3.5.7 Inspect working copy changes

One of the interesting aspects of Kart is the possibility of inspecting changes before commits. The QGIS plugin in particular offers a way of graphically visualize changes, both on a 2D map or in a table layout. To do so, return to the kart repository panel and right-click on the repository name, then click on the *Show working copy changes...* button (you can also right-click on a single layer to inspect changes only for that one).

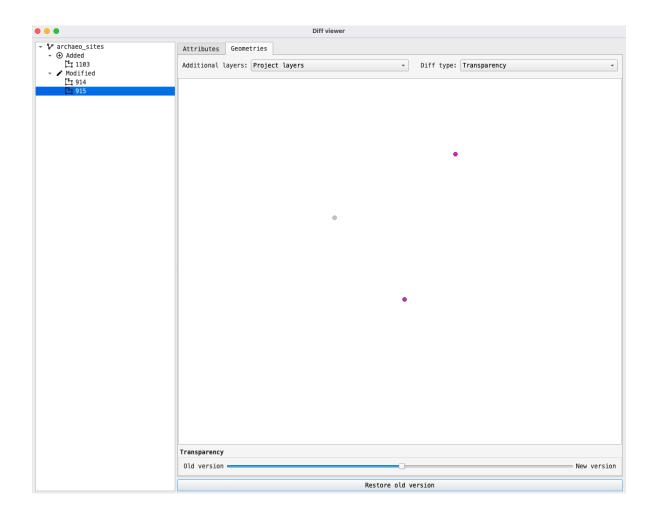


The visual diff viewer panel will open. On the left we can see (in a tree-like structure) the layer that was edited (archaeo\_sites, there would be more if we had edited more than one layer), the type of change (Added, Modified)m and the primary key of the added/modified entry. On the right, there are two types of diffs available, the Attributes table, and the Geometries tab. For the Added feature, the attribute table will be all green (as these are all new entries), and the geometry tab will not be much useful. However, if we switch to the *Modified* features, we can see that kart highlights the rows that have been modified in a convenient table with Old/New value pairs.



If we switch to the Geometries tab instead, and select the point that we have moved from the list on the left, then we will see how Kart highlights with transparency the previous location of the geometry/nodes and in a darker color the new location.

On the top of the Geometries tab, there are also two dropdown dialogs, one (Additional Layers) related to the layer we want to show in the Diff Viewer in addition to the modified geometries (options are: Project Layer, OSM Basemap, No additional layers), and another (Diff type) related to how we want to visualize the Diff (options are: Transparency, Swipe, Per-vertex diff). We found both transparency and per-vertex diff to be particularly useful in case of polygon geometries.

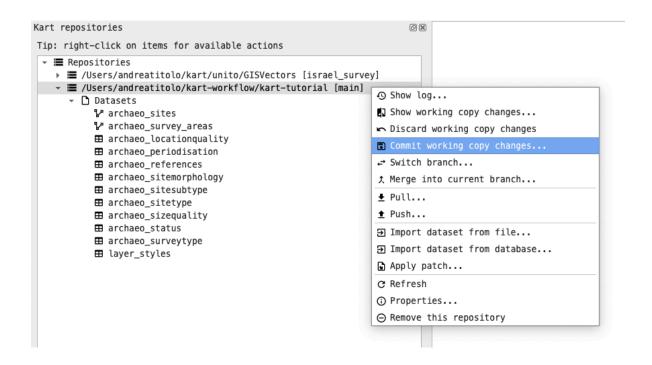


Note that the kart CLI also offers a way to inspect changes to the working copy, through the kart status and kart diff commands. For example, for the edits that we just made the output would be something similar:

Expand

```
kart status
On branch main
Changes in working copy:
  (use "kart commit" to commit)
  (use "kart restore" to discard changes)
  archaeo_sites:
    feature:
      1 inserts
      1 updates
kart diff
--- archaeo_sites:feature:914
+++ archaeo_sites:feature:914
                                       Type = Settlement
                                       Type = Fortified Settlement
                                Morphology = Flat site on natural mound
                                 Morphology = Mound/Tell
                                     Period = Roman-Byzantine
                                     Period = Hellenistic
                                 StartDate = -63
                                  StartDate = -332
                                    EndDate = 638
                                    EndDate = -63
+++ archaeo_sites:feature:1103
                                        fid = 1103
                                   geometry = POINT(...)
                                       Name = A new point
                                    NameAlt =
                                AncientName =
                                       Type = Settlement
                                Morphology = Flat site
                                     Period = Hellenistic
                                 StartDate = -332
                                    EndDate = -63
                              ArchaeoStatus = Surveyed
                                   Latitude =
                                  Longitude =
                                   Northing =
                                    Easting =
                                    LocQual = A
                                     SizeHa =
                                   SizeQual = C
                                SiteHeight =
                                     Source = Archaeological Survey of Isra
                                     Pages =
                                     Notes =
                                    Subtype = {"hamlet"}
                                  AltSource =
                            AltSourcePages =
                                AltSourceID =
```

#### 3.5.8 Commit working copy changes



relevant

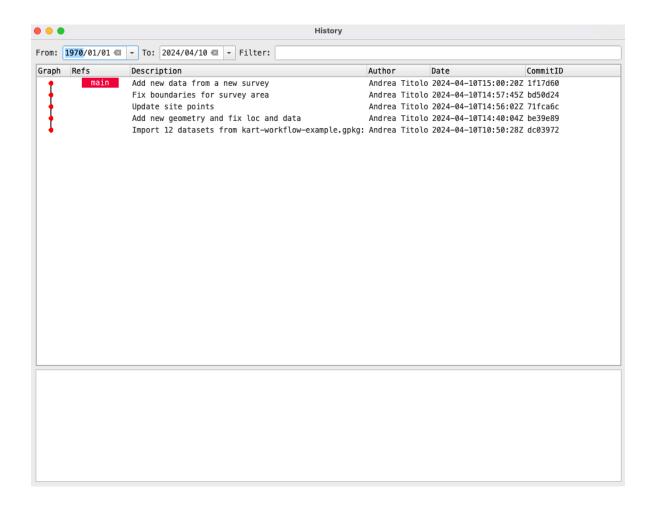
#### documentation

```
kart commit -m 'YOUR COMMIT MESSAGE'
[main be39e89] your commit message
  archaeo_sites:
    feature:
        1 inserts
        2 updates
Date: Wed Apr 10 16:40:04 2024 +0200
```

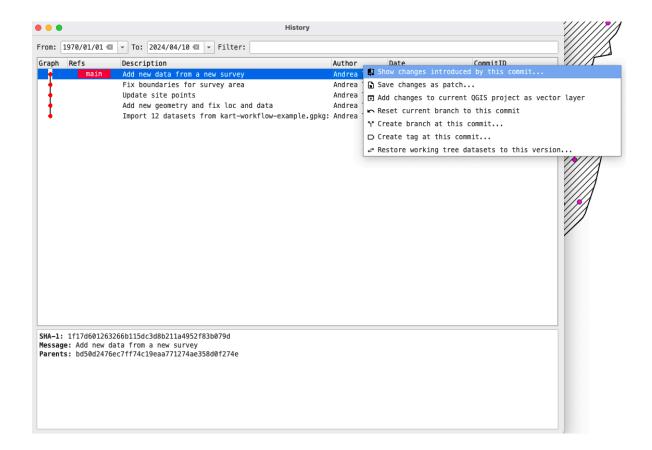
# **?** Before proceeding

Add a couple more points or modify existing ones, and make at least other two-three commits, by repeating the same steps above. You can also edit different layers, such has the table layers, or the survey\_areas layers.

# 3.5.9 Inspect the commit tree



3.5.10 Inspect changes introduced in a specific commit (and other options)



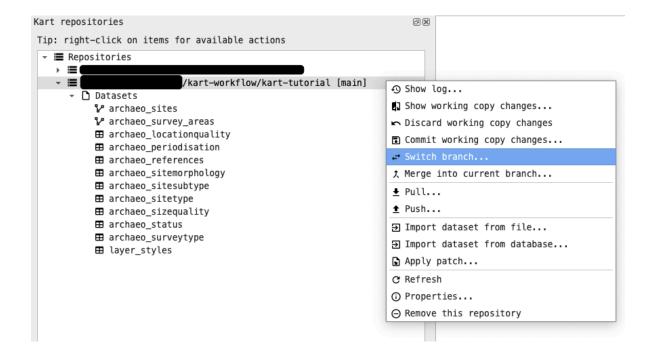
# 3.6 Collaborating with Kart

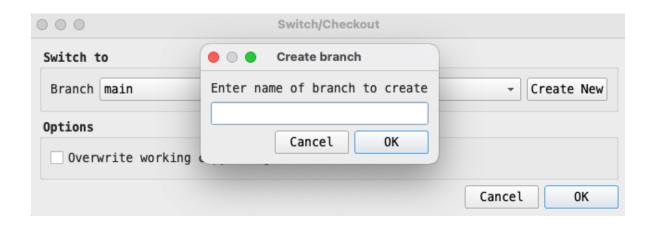


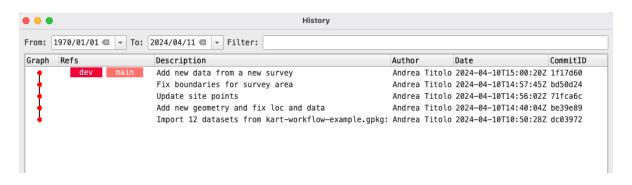
Here we are using the main branch as an example to avoid too much redundancy, but this is usually not a good practice, as usually is best to have everyone working on secondary branches. As suggested in this comment, it is recommended that one user will do the merge, push the changes, and any other user will use the merged branch as starting point for any new edits in order to avoid further conflicts. This means that after

the merge into main is completed and the updated main has been pushed to remote, new edits should be done on new branches created from the updated main branch (after updating the local main branch with kart pull).

#### 3.6.1 Branching





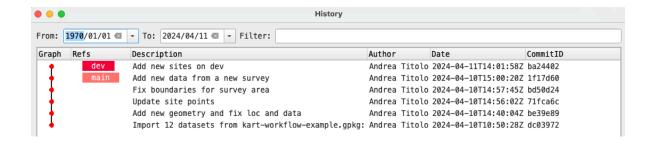


Kart QGIS Plugin docs

Kart docs command reference

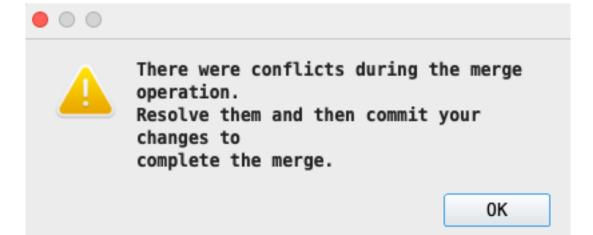
#### 3.6.1.1 Add features on the new branch

3.5.5



#### 3.6.1.2 Add features to the main branch

# 3.6.2 Merging



```
Merging branch "dev" into main
Conflicts found:
archaeo_sites:
    archaeo_sites:feature: 2 conflicts

Repository is now in "merging" state.
View conflicts with `kart conflicts` and resolve them with `kart resolve`.
Once no conflicts remain, complete this merge with `kart merge --continue`.
Or use `kart merge --abort` to return to the previous state.
```

#### 3.6.3 Dealing with conflicts

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

# 3.6.3.1 Viewing conflicts

# Note

Currently we are unable to access the graphical tool due to a possible bug in kart, thus we will continue with the CLI only. We will update this tutorial with the relevant info once we get past this issue. If you don't want to use the CLI, you can try following the kart plugin docs about solving conflicts and then continue on to the next section.

Expand

#### 3.6.3.2 Solving conflicts

kart revolve --with=(ancestors|ours|theirs|delete)

pull request

0.12.3

#### Caution

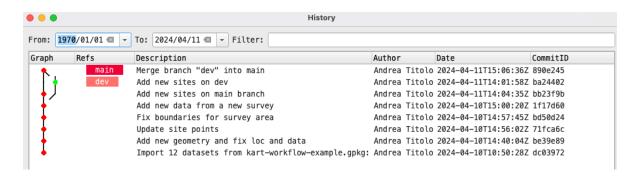
If there is only a partial overlapping of primary keys, kart will merge those keys that can be merged, while the other features will wait for the conflict resolution to be renumbered. This means that if you have some keys in the yourbranchname branch that do not overlap with primary keys in your main branch, and you use theirs as an option for renumbering, these primary keys will be added first after the keys already present in main (as mentioned here). This will break the sequential order of features from the secondary branch, however, it is more of a visual issue than a real one, unless you are relying on the order of those primary keys for other operations.

```
kart resolve --renumber=theirs
Resolved 2 conflicts. O conflicts to go.
Use `kart merge --continue` to complete the merge
```

#### 3.6.3.2.1 A note about terminal text editors



```
Merging branch "dev" into main
No conflicts!
Merge committed as 890e2455fe81f0e58c5c5bed8cb7010e4fb174f8
Updating kart-tutorial.gpkg ..
```



Kart QGIS plugin docs Kart docs on the same topic github issue

Wiki

#### 3.6.3.3 Delete branches

## Note

You cannot delete the branch you are currently on, so you will need to switch to another branch in order to delete it.

Deleted branch dev (was ba24402).

kart branch -a
\* main

# Important

If you do not delete you development branch, remember to start new works by creating new branches from the main one, otherwise your might branch from outdated dataset!

## 3.6.4 Push changes to a remote repository

## 3.6.4.1 Connect to a remote repository

3.4

```
kart remote -v
origin https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart-tutorial.git (fetch)
origin https://github.com/UnitoAssyrianGovernance/kart-tutorial.git (push)
```

#### 3.6.4.1.1 Create a remote repository

#### instructions



#### Warning

As a general rule of thumb, if you are creating a repository from one online forges, remember to NOT include any README.md, .gitignore, or other files. Best-case scenario they will be ignored by kart, but worst-case they might break your workflow, as kart will recognize an out-of-sync remote with no real means of fixing it.

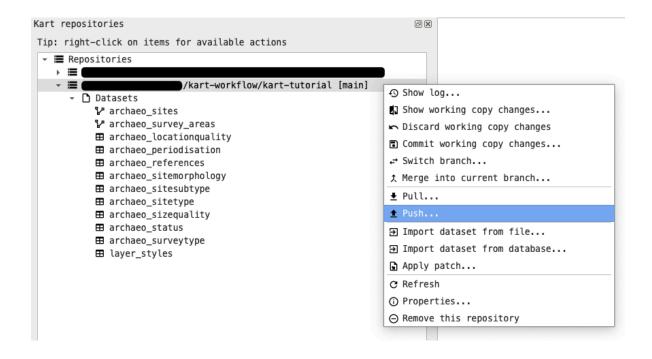
# Create a new repository

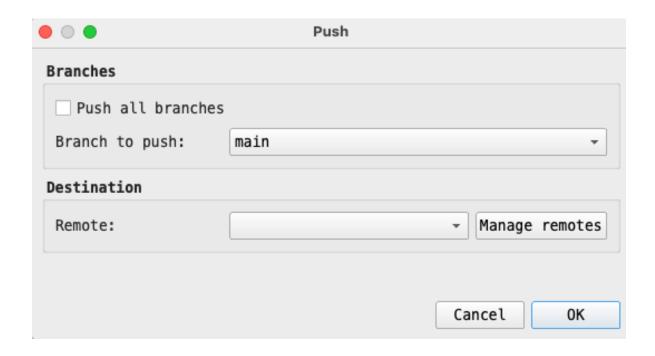
A repository contains all project files, including the revision history. Already have a project repository elsewhere? <a href="Import a repository">Import a repository</a>.

Required fields are marked with an asterisk (\*). Repository template No template ▼ Start your repository with a template repository's contents. Owner \* Repository name \* kart-tutorial kart-tutorial is available. Great repository names are short and memorable. Need inspiration? How about didactic-telegram? Description (optional) Anyone on the internet can see this repository. You choose who can commit. Private You choose who can see and commit to this repository. Initialize this repository with: Add a README file This is where you can write a long description for your project. Learn more about READMES. Add .gitignore .gitignore template: None 🔻 Choose which files not to track from a list of templates. Learn more about ignoring files. Choose a license License: None -A license tells others what they can and can't do with your code. Learn more about licenses. (i) You are creating a private repository in your personal account.

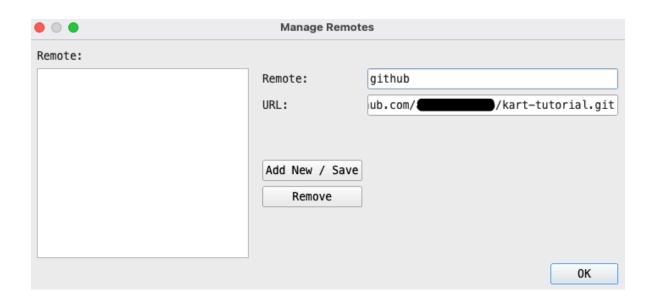
Create repository

## 3.6.4.1.2 Connect with the kart QGIS plugin





3.2



#### 3.6.4.1.3 Connect with the kart CLI

## Note

origin is a convention, you can name your remote however you want, just make sure to use the name you choose in the next commands.

## 3.6.4.2 Push changes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

```
kart push -u origin main

Enumerating objects: 892, done.
Counting objects: 100% (892/892), done.
Writing objects: 100% (892/892), 226.96 KiB | 113.48 MiB/s, done.
Total 892 (delta 0), reused 892 (delta 0), pack-reused 0
To https://github.com/yourusername/kart-tutorial.git
 * [new branch] main -> main
branch 'main' set up to track 'origin/main'.
```

# Note

In the same way, if you know that your remote has more recent changes that your local machine, you can use kart pull or the respective button in the kart plugin to pull changes from remote.

It is always best to pull changes if you are unsure someone made edits before your work!

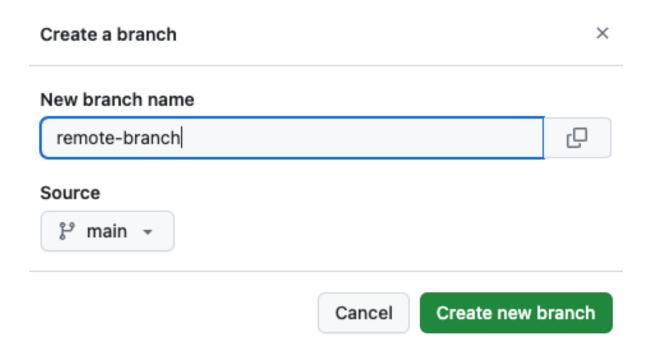
## 3.6.4.3 Addendum: Interact with remote branches

#### 3.6.4.3.1 Push new branches to remote

```
kart push -u origin feature

Total 0 (delta 0), reused 0 (delta 0), pack-reused 0
remote:
remote: Create a pull request for 'feature' on GitHub by visiting:
remote: https://github.com/yourusername/kart-tutorial/pull/new/feature
remote:
To https://github.com/yourusername/kart-tutorial.git
  * [new branch] feature -> feature
branch 'feature' set up to track 'origin/feature'.
```

#### 3.6.4.3.2 Pull new branches from remote



```
kart pull

* [new branch] remote-branch -> origin/remote-branch
Merging 890e245 into feature
Already up to date
```

```
kart branch -a

* feature
  main
```

```
remotes/origin/feature
remotes/origin/main
remotes/origin/remote-branch
```

```
kart switch remote-branch

Creating new branch 'remote-branch' to track 'origin/remote-branch'...
```

## 3.6.4.3.3 Delete local and remote branches

1.

2.

3.

	_	•	
4	1	ı	ns

- 4.1 Selective import tables
- 4.2 Rename data on import
- 4.3 Create data from QGIS and start version them with kart

github issue

1.

2.

3.

```
On branch main
Your branch is up to date with 'origin/main'.

Nothing to commit, working copy clean

Untracked tables:
THE UNTRACKED LAYERS
```

4.

## 4.3.1 A note on the commit message when running kart add-dataset

3.6.3.2.1

## 4.3.2 Addendum - layer styles



## Warning

Note that, at the time of writing (2023-11-15), due to a small mishandling of layer\_styles schema by QGIS, if your layer name is longer than 30 characters and your style is named with the same name as the layer, you will incur into an error when trying to run kart add-dataset layer\_styles. As explained in this issue, this is not a kart bug. We recommend keeping the layer style name (or the layer names) below 30 characters to avoid issues.

## 5 Useful Resources

• Kart website

## 5.1 Documentation

- Kart documentation
- Kart command reference
- Kart QGIS plugin documentation

## 5.2 Other resources

#### 5.2.1 Presentations about kart

- Kart: An introduction to practical data versioning for geospatial
- Kart: A Practical Tool for Versioning Geospatial Data
- 2023 QGIS Data Versioning with Kart
- Spatial data versioning with the Kart QGIS Plugin

## 5.2.2 Guides and tutorials about Git

- Understanding Git: A Beginner's Guide to Version Control (With Visuals)
- Getting Git Right
- Git: the simple guide
- Git Official Documentation with useful resources
- Other tutorials from the Git website

## 5.2.3 QGIS

- QGIS Website
- QGIS User Guide
- QGIS Training Manual
- A Gentle Introduction to QGIS