3.2.2   Data acquisition

- Data acquisition path in the ScopeMeter

The analog input signals are first attenuated and/or amplified and then converted into digital values by the ADC. The samples of the input signals are stored in the Acquisition RAM of the Digital ASIC. If 512 samples are stored in memory, the second trigger pulse will signal the microprocessor that the acquisition is ready. (We assume that the ScopeMeter is using random repetitive sampling, see next section.) Then the acquired data is ready for processing. The microprocessor reads the data from the Acquisition RAM and processes the data according to the actual calibration values. These calibration values (constants) are copied from Flash ROM to RAM during startup. The calibration values have been stored in Flash ROM during the calibration process. After processing, the data is stored in the External RAMs. These RAMs also contain the more static picture elements, for example the grid-, cursor- and text data.

- A multitasking kernel for hardware and software scheduling

Processing the acquired data is only one of the tasks of the microprocessor. The ScopeMeter uses a multitasking kernel for hardware and software scheduling, based on internal and external interrupts. The microprocessor contains internal timers, which can be programmed by the software. One of these timers is used to generate interrupts, e.g. to scan the keypad for depressed or released keys.

Except processing (calibrating) the acquired data, the microprocessor also does mathematical computations and controls the hardware. The multitasking kernel takes care that every 20 ms of processing time, a task is interrupted. This task will then be held and rescheduled, unless it requires execution without interruption. In this way a variety of user-requested tasks can be handled quasi-simultaneously, without the user being aware of the heavy loads on the microprocessor. The display of the data on the LCD is done by the Digital ASIC, also taking part in the multitasking scheme.

- Sampling and Triggering

The ScopeMeter uses two types of sampling, commonly used in many Digital Storage Oscilloscopes: **REAL-TIME SAMPLING** and **RANDOM REPETITIVE SAMPLING**.

In the real-time sampling mode (timebase settings: 60s/div...1 µs/div) the ScopeMeter takes a series of samples from a single period of the input signal. These samples are later used to reconstruct the signal. During the real-time sampling mode, the Digital ASIC calculates the trigger pulses out of the acquired data (for timebase settings between 60s/div...50 µs/div). For timebase settings between 20 µs/div and 10 ns/div, the triggering is done by the Analog ASIC, using analog comparators.

In random repetitive sampling mode (time base 500 ns/div ... 10 ns/div), the ScopeMeter takes a sample from successive cycles in a repetitive signal. These samples are stored in memory and combined to reconstruct the original signal.

In this sampling mode, samples are taken from the input signal at intervals determined by the internal ScopeMeter clock. Since there is no time-correlation between the system's clock and the incoming signal, all samples are taken at random points of the signal. The time between the trigger moment and the sampling moment must be tracked to enable reconstruction of the signal from the samples. This time, DELTA T, is generated by the Analog ASIC. See section 3.4.5 and figure 3.12.
During random repetitive sampling mode, the ScopeMeter always uses analog triggering (Analog ASIC).