



Using the Beaglebone Black Programmable Real-Time Unit with the RemoteProc and Remote Messaging Framework to Capture and Play Data from an ADC

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Chapter 1

Introduction

This is the documentation for a small embedded GNU/Linux project utilizing the RemoteProc and RPMsg framework in the Beaglebone Green (BBG) development board. The project repository is located here:

<https://github.com/Greg-R/pruadc1>

The inspiration for this project came from the superb book “Exploring Beaglebone” by Derek Molloy. Professor Molloy’s project utilized assembly code and the UIO driver. The hardware used in this project is essentially a copy of the Molloy design.

Recent developments in the Texas Instruments PRU support include the RemoteProc and Remote Messaging frameworks, as well as an extensively documented C compiler and much additional supporting documentation. This project utilizes these frameworks and is entirely dependent upon C code in both the PRU and GNU/Linux user space. The detailed examples provided by TI in the “PRU Support Package” were invaluable in developing this project:

<https://git.ti.com/pru-software-support-package>

A listing of additional resources is found in the Resources chapter.

An MCP3008 Analog-to-Digital Converter (ADC) IC is connected to the BBG GPIO pins which are in turn connected to the PRU using the “Universal IO” kernel driver which is deployed by default to the current distributions of Debian on the Beaglebones. The PRUs communicate with a user-space C program via “character devices” created by the remote messaging kernel driver. The data is pushed to a USB codec via the “Advanced Linux Sound Architecture”, and finally, to an analog speaker. The diagram below illustrates the flow of data through the system.

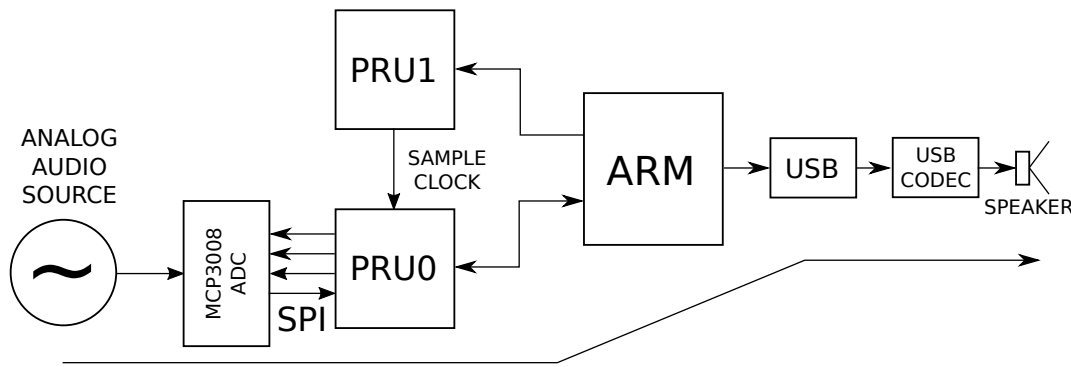


Figure 1.1: Flow of Data Through the System

1.1 Project Goals

This project does not solve a specific practical problem. It is a laboratory experiment.

The primary goal is to learn to program the PRUs, and to control and communicate with them from the operating system’s “user space”. Here is a list of the project goals and sub-goals:

- Write C code for the PRUs which implement a SPI bus.
- Build a “proto-cape” with an ADC.
- Use the “Universal IO” to configure the PRU interface to the GPIO pins.
- Write a user-space C program which communicates with the PRUs via character devices.
- Use the Analog Discovery 2 as a logic analyzer to debug the PRU SPI C code.
- Stream the digitized audio data from the ADC to the “Advanced Linux Sound Architecture” in real time. Play the audio to a speaker.
- Document and publish the project to Github.

1.2 Limitations

The BeagleBone's Sitara "System On Chip" is quite powerful, and this power is probably masking several inefficiencies in the project's design. All of the testing and debugging was done with a bare-bones Debian distribution with no other significant processes running.

The speaker audio does not have noticeable distortion or glitches when listening with the speaker. The audio was not examined with a spectrum or distortion analyzer. It may not be the best quality audio.

The audio sample rate was limited to 8 kHz, which is the lowest rate accepted by ALSA. A follow-up investigation will see if the sample rate can be increased. It is not known what aspect of the system will begin to break down as sample rate is increased.

The sample rate had to be “tuned” to prevent “buffer underruns” reported by the ALSA system. An approach to make the real-time data stream robust is not known by the author and needs further investigation.

All of the development was done as root user via ssh on the BeagleBone Green. This is generally not a good practice, however, considering this as an embedded and experimental project it was not considered to be a serious drawback.

Chapter 2

System Diagram

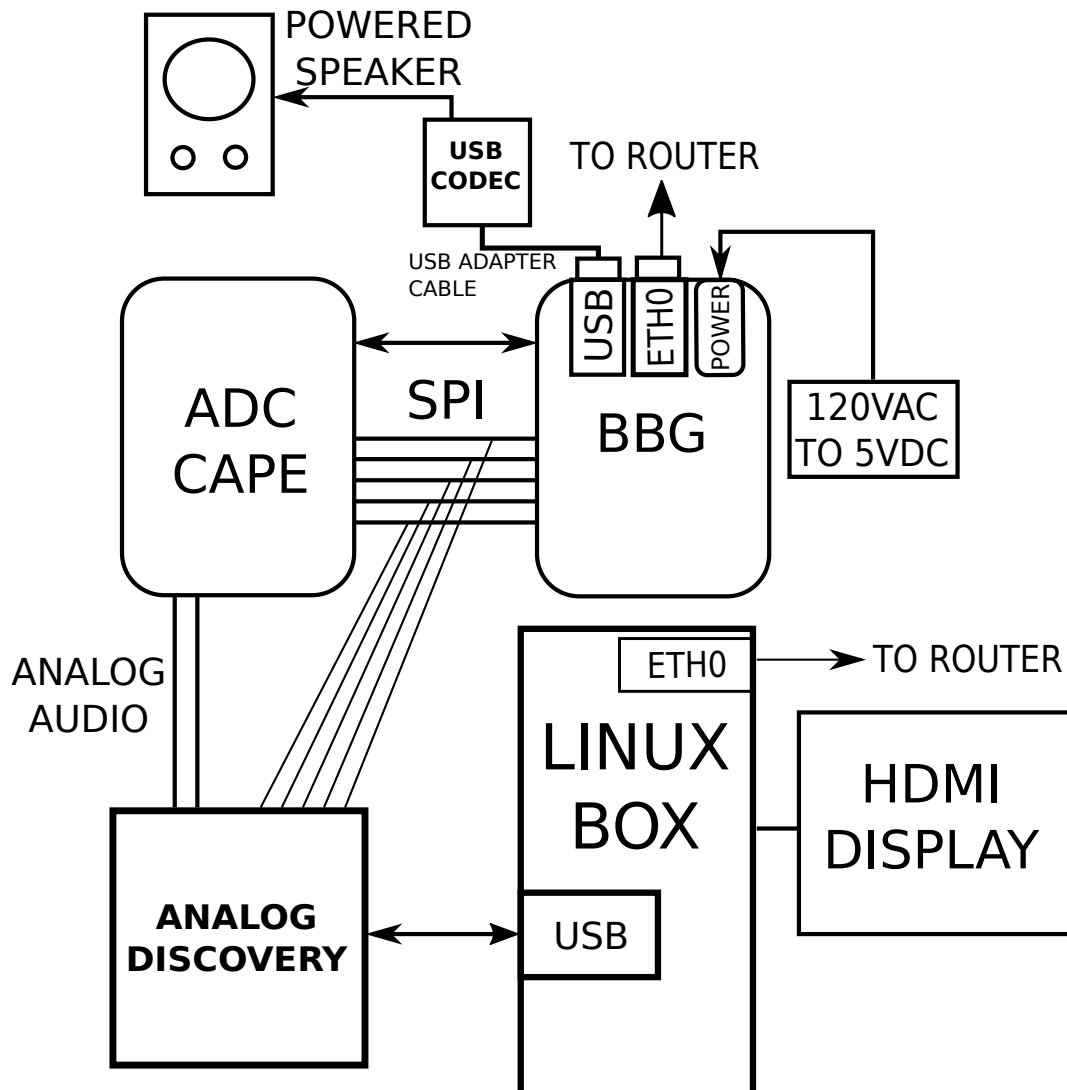


Figure 2.1: PRU-ADC System Diagram

The system diagram as shown includes all of the facilities used during development.

The “Linux Box” is a desktop PC architecture machine running Ubuntu 14.04/16.04. Communication to the BBG was done via “Secure Shell” (SSH). The Linux Box also served as host for the Analog Discovery 2 and GUI via the HDMI display. The Analog Discovery 2 also provided analog audio to the ADC input.

The “Beagle Bone Green” (BBG) is the TI Sitara-based platform board manufactured by Seeed Studio.

The “ADC Cape” is an Adafruit breadboard with the MCP3008 and headers soldered to it. A few wires are required to complete the connections to the ADC to the header pins, DC bias and ground.

The “USB Codec” plugs into the USB connector on the BBG. Due to interference with the adjacent ethernet connector, a short USB extension cable is recommended.

Chapter 3

Prototype Cape Detail

The proto-cape schematic is simple, and is composed of a single component, the MCP3008 ADC.

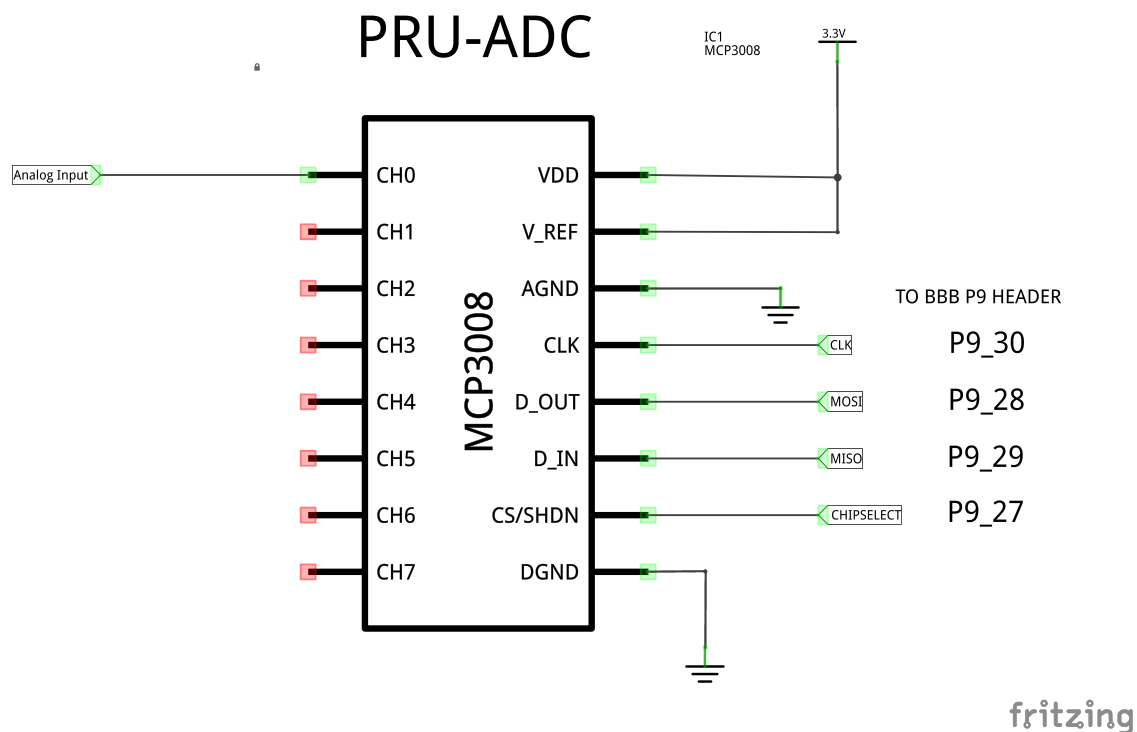


Figure 3.1: PRU-ADC Cape Breadboard

The “Cape” was built on an Adafruit proto-cape:

<https://www.adafruit.com/products/572>

Here is a breadboard diagram from Fritzing which shows how the proto-cape is wired:

In addition to the header pins required to plug into the BBB, extra rows of headers were soldered to the top of the breadboard. This allows easy connection to the Discovery Analog 2 as seen in

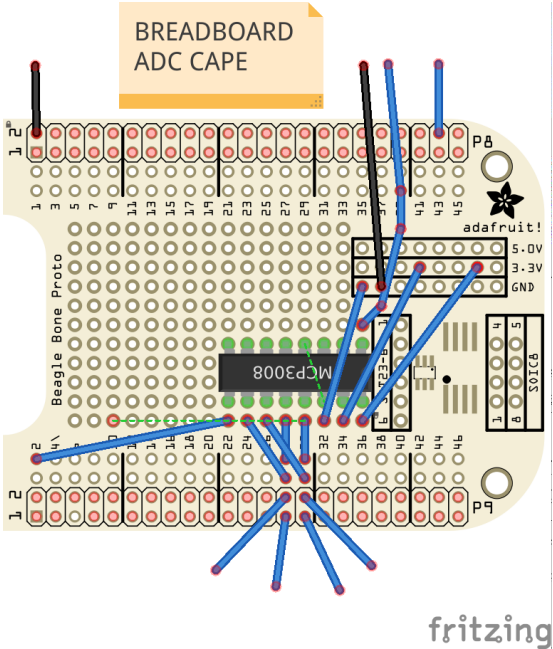


Figure 3.2: PRU-ADC Cape Breadboard

the following photograph.

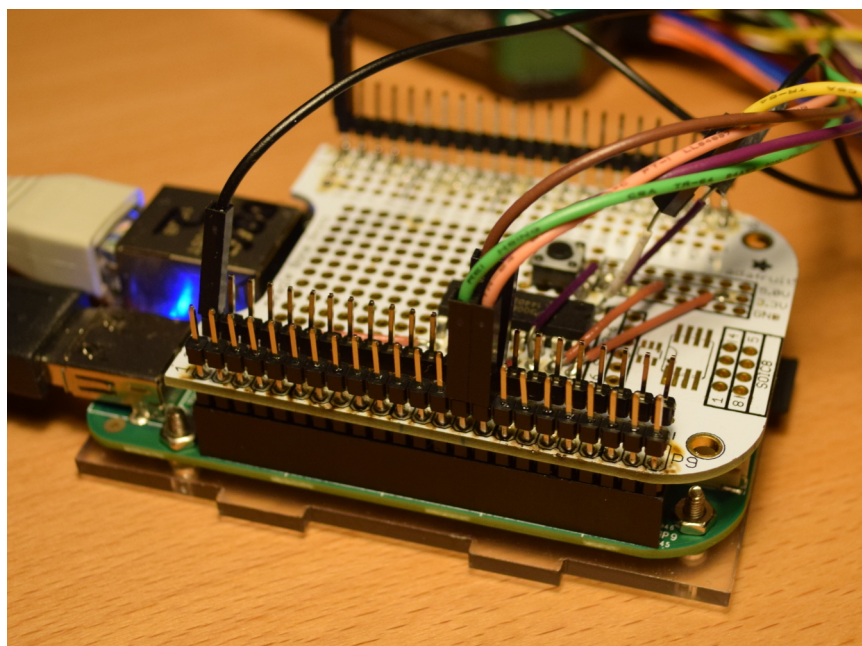


Figure 3.3: PRU-ADC Cape Breadboard

Chapter 4

PRU Firmware and User-space Program

The “PRU Firmware” are two binary files which are placed in the directory `/lib/firmware`. These files must have specific names as follows:

- `am335x-pru0-fw`
- `am335x-pru1-fw`

The Makefile includes `cp` commands to copy the firmwares to the `/lib/firmware` directory.

4.1 Implementing the SPI Bus in C

The SPI bus C program roughly follows the PRU assembly code written by Derek Molloy. The C code is compiled to a binary file `am335x-pru0-fw`. The firmware is loaded into PRU0 automatically by the `remoteproc` kernel driver.

The program begins with code sequestered from the example code files in TI’s PRU Software Support Package. This code establishes the character device driver via the “Remote Proc Messenger” kernel driver. There is a sort of “priming” process required whereby a user space program writes to the device driver. This initializes the character driver, which allows it to write data from the PRU to the character driver and thus making the data available in user-space.

After the initialization is complete, the program enters a for loop. The SPI bus is implemented inside this for loop. This is done by bit-banging the GPIOs which have been connected to PRU0 via the Universal IO. Each pass through the for loop captures a single 10-bit sample from the ADC.

The samples are accumulated in a buffer. When the buffer is filled, the data is written to the character device via a function provided by the `RPMmsg` kernel driver.

Timings are critical, and this was accomplished by using the compiler intrinsic `__delay_cycles`. Each delay is an absolute value of 5 nanoseconds. This scheme appears to produce accurate enough timing to implement the SPI bus in real time.

4.2 Implementing the Timing Clock in C

The “Timing Clock” sets the data sample rate. The code is compiled into firmware `am335x-pru1-fw`, and this binary file is loaded into PRU1 by the `Remoteproc` kernel driver.

The output of the Timing Clock is a simple pulse at a rate of 8 kHz. This pulse is written to a PRU shared memory location. This means that the SPI PRU0 can access this memory address and read its state. A while loop in PRU0 polls this address and exits from the loop when the pulse goes high. This polling action is done at the top of the for loop which captures a data sample from the ADC. Thus the data capturing sequence in PRU0 is gated at the Timing Clock pulse rate.

The Timing Clock does not begin emitting pulses as soon as the firmware is loaded and started. There is a character device created in the initialization section of the C code. The character device is created, and then a while loop begins monitoring for a specific incoming message, which in this case is the letter “g” (go); When the go message is successfully received, the while loop is exited and the Timing Clock pulse code begins emitting pulses to PRU shared memory.

Chapter 5

User Space Program: Fork and Named Pipe

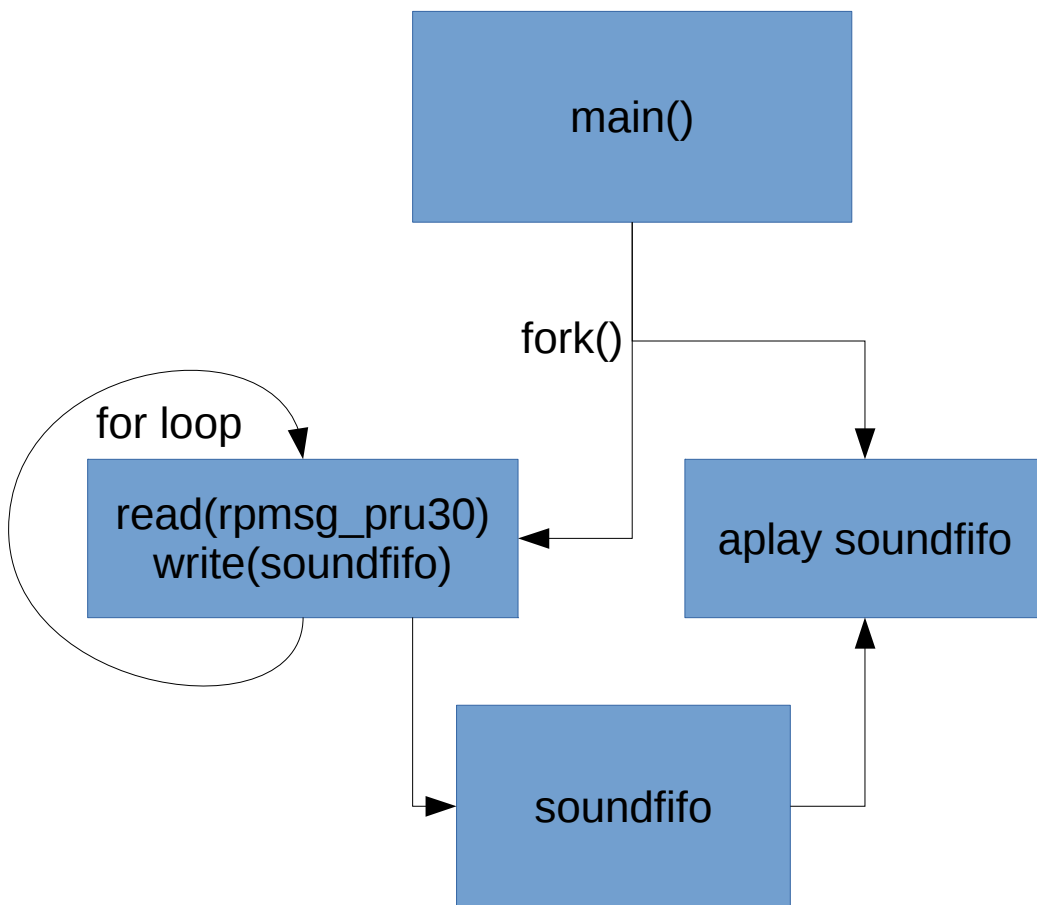


Figure 5.1: Data Flow in User Space Program

The user-space program is responsible for reading the data from PRU0 and then writing that data to ALSA. This requires the program to create two separate processes and some facility to allow data to flow from one process to the other.

The system call to `fork()` combined with a “named pipe” implements these features in a user-

space C program.

Note that the user-space program does not create the named pipe. A command in the Makefile creates the named pipe in the same directory as the user-space executable. The named pipe appears in the file system and can be seen with the usual `ls` command.

Chapter 6

Incorporating Advanced Linux Sound Architecture or “ALSA”

The system generates a stream of audio data samples at a rate of 8 kHz. This data could be stored to memory and later manipulated. Derek Molloy’s project used “GNU Plot” to graph data captured by the ADC-PRU system and stored to the Beaglebone’s memory (RAM).

One of the primary goals of this project was to investigate real-time data "streaming". So rather than a static capture, it was decided that the data stream would be somehow extracted from the system and “played” to an analog speaker.

The primary sound system in GNU/Linux is called the “Advanced Linux Sound Architecture”. This system is very mature and flexible, and also it has a very complex Applications Programming Interface (API).

Fortunately the ALSA system includes command line utilities which made meeting the project goals very simple!

6.0.1 Pulse Code Modulation

What kind of data is delivered by the PRU as it reads the ADC via SPI bus?

The ADC samples data with a “resolution” of 10 bits. What this means is that the analog input of the ADC is “quantized” into 2^{10} or 1024 slices.

The ADC is capable of handling an input range from a little bit above 0 Volts to a little bit below 3.3 Volts. So a good approximation is a 3.0 Volts range. Splitting this into 1024 slices yields:

$$\frac{3.0 \text{ Volts}}{1024} = 2.9 \text{ millivolts per step}$$

Chapter 7

RemoteProc Framework Messaging

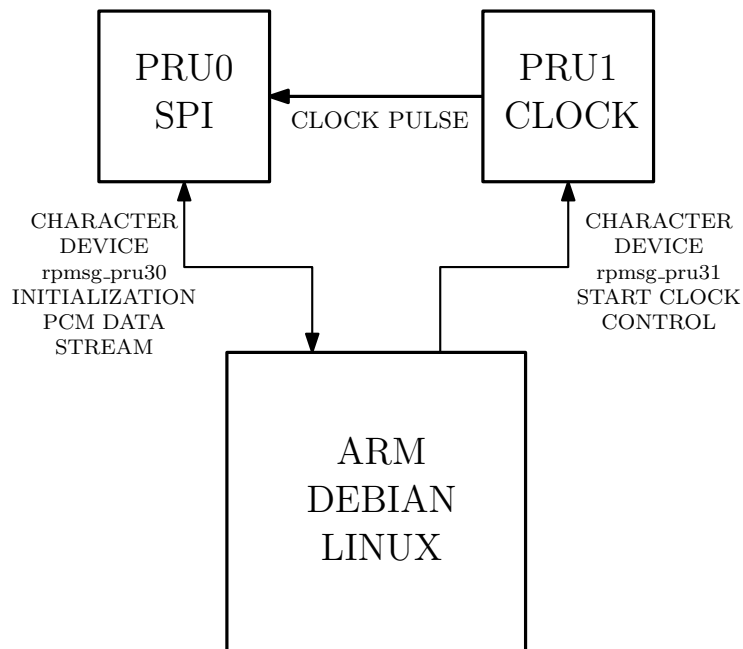


Figure 7.1: PRU<->ARM Character Devices

Control of the PRU Clock Using Character Driver

Chapter 8

Universal IO and Connecting PRU to the Outside World

This project did not require a custom “Device Tree Overlay”. Instead, the “Universal IO” driver was used along with a simple shell script.

The Universal IO project is located at this Github repository:

<https://github.com/cdsteinkuehler/beaglebone-universal-io>

The configuration is as follows:

```
config-pin P8.30 pruout
config-pin P9.31 pruout
config-pin P9.27 pruout
config-pin P9.29 pruout
config-pin P9.28 pruin
config-pin P9.30 pruout
```

The above can also be put into a file, for example “pru-config”:

```
P8.30 pruout
P9.31 pruout
P9.27 pruout
P9.29 pruout
P9.28 pruin
P9.30 pruout
```

The command to load the above would be:

```
config-pin -f pru-config
```

Note that another step required is create the \$SLOTS environment variable and also to set on of the Universal-IO device trees as follows:

```
export SLOTS=/sys/devices/platform/bone_capemgr
echo univ-emmc > $SLOTS/slots
```

8.0.1 The PRU GPIO Spreadsheet

Use “git clone” to download this repository:

<https://github.com/selsinork/beaglebone-black-pinmux>

The spreadsheet file contained in this repository is pinmux.ods. The LibreOffice suite has a spreadsheet application which will read this file.

This spreadsheet is extremely useful when configuring the PRU or other functions to the Beaglebone pin multiplexer.

Chapter 9

Shell Scripts

There are two very important shell scripts located in the `shell_scripts` of the git repository.

These scripts are very simple and each contain only a single command.

The commands are described in the notes file from this github repository:

<https://github.com/ZeekHuge/BeagleScope>

And specifically, this is the path to the notes file:

https://github.com/ZeekHuge/BeagleScope/blob/port_to_4.4.12-ti-r31%2B/docs/current_remoteproc_drivers.notes

The commands are seen in section 2:

```
echo "4a334000.pru0" > /sys/bus/platform/drivers/pru-rproc/unbind
echo "4a334000.pru0" > /sys/bus/platform/drivers/pru-rproc/bind
echo "4a338000.pru1" > /sys/bus/platform/drivers/pru-rproc/unbind
echo "4a338000.pru1" > /sys/bus/platform/drivers/pru-rproc/bin
```

The above shell commands show how the PRUs can “bind” and “unbind” from the remoteproc driver. These commands are extremely useful and their placement in shell scripts allows them to be easily run at the command line by entering “prumodin” or ”prumodout”.

The shell scripts should be copied to `/usr/bin` so they will be available in any shell.

Chapter 10

Setting up the PRU Compiler on the Beaglebone Green

The following describes the simplest possible set-up. Everything was done via the command line, and the vim editor was used extensively to develop the C code and shell scripts.

SSH was used to remotely access the BBG from a 64 bit desktop computer running Ubuntu 14.04.

For reference, here is the link to the TI PRU support package:

<https://git.ti.com/pru-software-support-package>

The above package can be cloned to the BBG. There is a good set of examples and labs included. The labs are documented here:

http://processors.wiki.ti.com/index.php/PRU_Training:_Hands-on_Labs

Note that the files appropriate for the BBG are in the folders with name am335x.

The Makefiles in the labs and examples were designed to work with a particular set-up which can be easily implemented on the BBG.

The following is a list of recommended steps to prepare a BBG for compiling PRU C files.

1. Flash IOT image to micro-sd.
2. Insert micro-sd into BBG slot, press boot and power buttons and release.
3. ssh root@192.168.1.7 (or whatever the IP is set to)
4. uname -r to verify kernel -> 4.4.9-ti-r25 Make sure it is the desired kernel!
5. apt-get update
6. cd / and then find . -name cgt-pru, and the path is /usr/share/ti/cgt-pru. This is the location of the PRU library and includes. However, the clpru compiler binary is not there: which clpru /usr/bin/clpru So the compiler binary is in a different location. This is a problem for the labs make files. cd /usr/share/ti/cgt-pru mkdir bin cd bin ln -s /usr/bin/clpru

clpru So now the make files will find the compiler executable in the correct location via the link.

7. `cd /home/debian git clone git://git.ti.com/pru-software-support-package/pru-software-support-package.git` This will clone a copy of the latest pru support package.
8. `cd` into lab_5 in the package: `cd lab_5/solution/PRU_Halt make` This will fail, it is looking for environment variable `$PRU_CGT` `export PRU_CGT=/usr/share/ti/cgt-pru` Now try `make` again. It should succeed.
9. `cd gen cp PRU_Halt.out am335x-pru0-fw cp am335x-pru0-fw /lib/firmware`
10. Now `cd` into the `PRU_RPMMsg_Echo_Interrupt1` directory in the same lab_5. Edit `main.c` as follows: `// #define CHAN_NAME "rpmsg-client-sample" #define CHAN_NAME "rpmsg-pru"`
11. Now almost the same as #9, this time for pru1: `cd gen cp PRU_RPMMsg_Echo_Interrupt1.out am335x-pru1-fw cp am335x-pru1-fw /lib/firmware`
12. Reboot
13. `cd /dev` look for `rpmsg_pru31` device file. It will be there!

Chapter 11

Using the Analog Discovery 2

This table shows the Discovery 2 to PRU-ADC cape connections.

Table 11.1: Analog Discovery 2 Wiring

Logic Wire Number	Color	SPI	BBG Header
1	Green	Chip Select	P9.27
2	Purple	Clock	P9.30
3	Brown	MISO	P9.28
4	Pink	MOSI	P9.29
5	Green	PRU1 Clock	P8.30

The repository includes a set-up file for the Analog Discovery 2 in the “discovery2” directory. The Logic Analyzer will appear as in the image below.

The Analog Discovery also includes an audio waveform generator, and it will appear in the GUI as shown in this image:

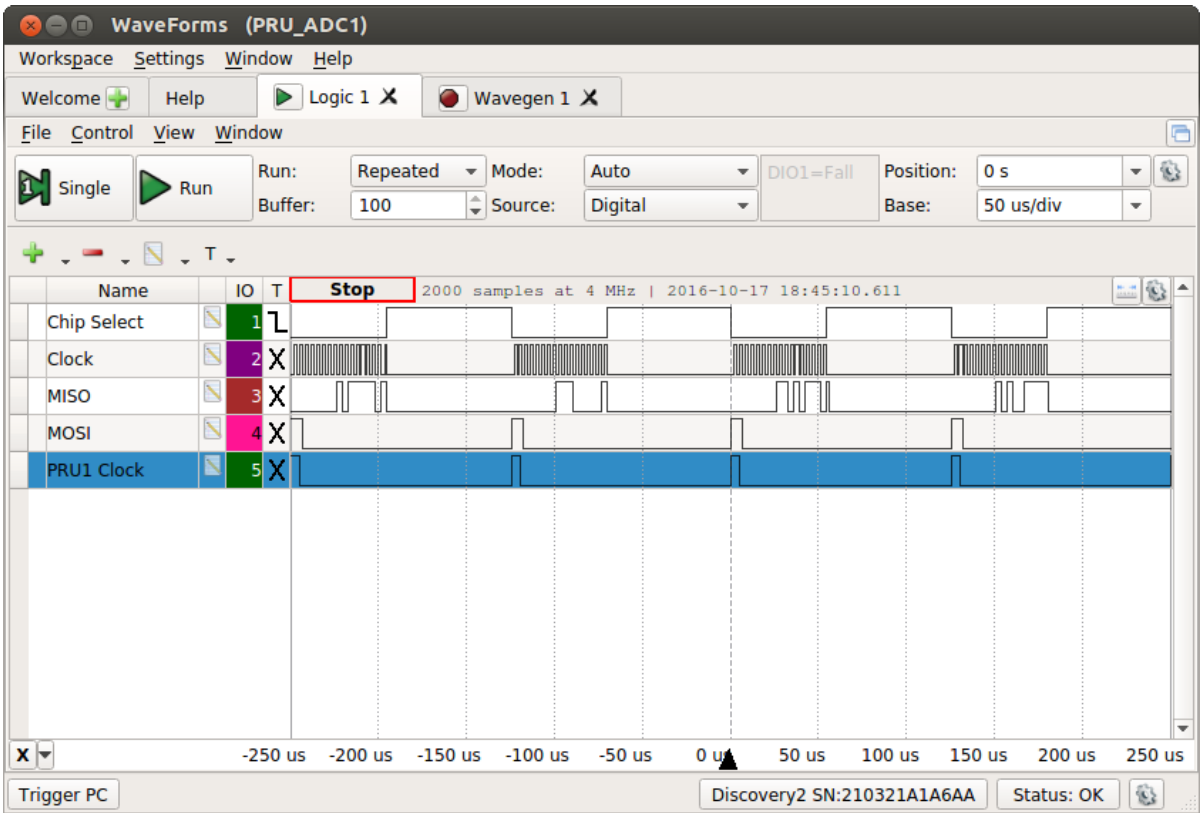


Figure 11.1: Analog Discovery 2 Logic Analyzer Display

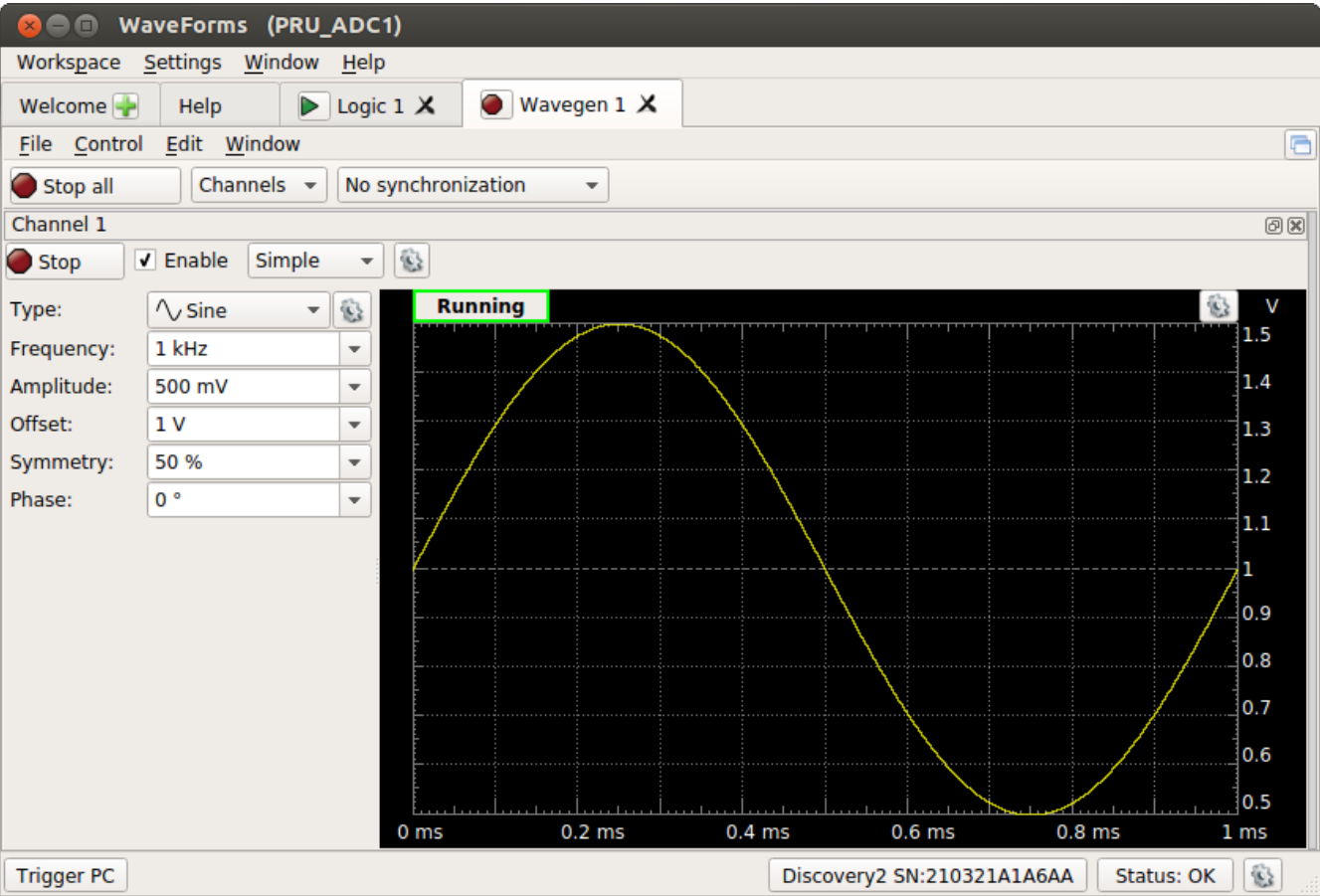


Figure 11.2: Analog Discovery 2 Waveform Generator Display

Chapter 12

Resources

Derek Molloy's "High-Speed Analog to Digital Conversion (ADC) using the PRU-ICSS The MCP3008 8-Channel 10-bit ADC" project:

<http://exploringbeaglebone.com/chapter13/>

Github repository for this project:

<https://github.com/Greg-R/pruadc1>

<http://software-dl.ti.com/codegen/non-esd/downloads/download.htm#PRU>

Beagle Bone Green:

<https://www.seeedstudio.com/SeeedStudio-BeagleBone-Green-p-2504.html>

The Remoteproc Framework and Remote Messaging:

http://processors.wiki.ti.com/index.php/PRU-ICSS_Remoteproc_and_RPMsg

The Analog Discovery 2 by Digilent:

<http://store.digilentinc.com/analog-discovery-2-100msps-usb-oscilloscope-logic-analyzer-an>

The USB Codec:

https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B001MSS6CS/ref=oh_aui_search_detailpage?ie=UTF8&psc=1

Adafruit Beaglebone breadboard cape:

<https://www.adafruit.com/products/572>

The BeagleScope project:

<https://github.com/ZeekHuge/BeagleScope>