Why "John Bull"?

John Bull is a national personification of Great Britain in general and England in particular, especially in political cartoons and similar graphic works. He is usually depicted as a stout, middle-aged, country dwelling, jolly, matter-of-fact man.

John Bull originated in the creation of Dr. John Arbuthnot, a friend of Jonathan Swift (author of Gulliver's Travels) and satirist Alexander Pope in 1712, and was popularized first by British print makers. Arbuthnot created Bull in his pamphlet Law is a Bottomless Pit (1712). The same year Arbuthnott published a four-part political narrative The History of John Bull. In this satirical treatment of the War of the Spanish Succession a bold, honest and forthright clothier John Bull brings a lawsuit against various figures intended to represent the kings of France and Spain as well as institutions both foreign and domestic.

Originally derided, William Hogarth and other British writers made Bull "a heroic archetype of the free-born Englishman." Later, the figure of Bull was disseminated overseas by illustrators and writers such as American cartoonist Thomas Nast and Irish writer George Bernard Shaw, author of John Bull's Other Island.

Starting in the 1760s, Bull was portrayed as an Anglo-Saxon country dweller. He was almost always depicted in a buff-colored waistcoat and a simple frock coat (in the past Navy blue, but more recently with the Union Jack colors). Britannia, or a lion, is sometimes used as an alternative in some editorial cartoons.

As a literary figure, John Bull is well-intentioned, frustrated, full of common sense, and entirely of native country stock. Unlike Uncle Sam later, he is not a figure of authority but rather a yeoman who prefers his small beer and domestic peace, possessed of neither patriarchal power nor heroic defiance. Arbuthnot provided him with a sister named Peg (Scotland), and a traditional adversary in Louis Baboon (the House of Bourbon in France). Peg continued in pictorial art beyond the 18th century, but the other figures associated with the original tableau dropped away. John Bull himself continued to frequently appear as a national symbol in posters and cartoons as late as World War I.

John Bull has been used in a variety of different ad campaigns over the years, and is a common sight in British editorial cartoons of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Singer David Bowie famously wore a coat worn in the style of Bull.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Bull]